Polyhedron™

NEWSZINE

60

JUNE

RPGA™ NETWORK

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Classifieds

England A 19-year-old male gamer is seeking players and DMs in the Huddersfield area. I play the AD&D® 2nd edition game and the TOP SECRET/ S.I.™ game. I am also willing to try new games. Write David Greef, 108 Halifax Old Road, Birkby, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, England.

Arizona Attention all gamers in the Phoenix area: I am looking for gamers and GMs to form a gaming group. All ages welcome. Write to Elton Hicks, 3030 N. 7th St. #15, Phoenix, AZ 85014, or call 602-234-1927.

Arizona: Attention all Scottsdale area D&D® game players: I am interested in playing, and am also eager to learn new role-playing games. I want to form a club. I am also willing to have pen pals. Please write: Nickolas Van Halderen, 5819 E. Paradise Ln., Scottsdale, AZ 85254.

Arkansas Mature half-elf and amateur dwarf seek companions! I am looking for a central Arkansas gaming group that can add two players for some AD&D games. Please contact: Eric Francis, 32 Nob View Cir., Little Rock, AR 72205-2447, 501-225-5384.

California: Gamers in the San Francisco bay area and surroundings: do you want to join a Network club? If you do, please write to Chris McGuigan, 2010 Hillside Dr., Burlingame, CA 94010.

Illinois: I recently joined the Network, hoping to find AD&D gamers in the Chicago area. I have played for quite a few years. Contact Mike Starshak, 9253 S. Sacremento Ave., Evergreen Park, IL 60642.

Iowa: Is there a role-playing group located in or near Dubuque? I have played Robotech, MERP, Twilight: 2000, and the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game. I have also played in the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ setting. I am willing to learn new games. Please write to Tom Mess, 605 Garfield, Dubuque, IA 52001.

Michigan: I am a mature 17-year-old GM/player looking for gamers in the Flint area. I play both editions of the AD&D game, the D&D® game, STAR FRONTIERS™ game, Paranoia, Warhammer, and Hunter Planet. I am interested in learning new games. I would like to join or form a Network Club. Please contact: Edward Elsner, 9204 Wabun Ct., Flushing, MI 48433, 313-659-1269.

New Jersey: Attention all role players in the South Jersey area: Excellent DMs and masterful players needed for campaigns set in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ setting, RAVENLOFT™ game, SPELLJAMMER™ game, and the FORGOTTEN REALMS world. Write Tom Sullivan, 5103 Laurel Ave., Pennsauken, NJ 08109, or call 609- 662-7488.

New Jersey: Looking for RPGA members in my area to play the AD&D game, D&D game, RuneQuest, and others. I would like to form a Network Club. PBM players, especially in Duelmasters and Bloodpit, are welcome. Please contact: George A. Habrecht, 116 Chestnut St., Ramsey, NJ 07446, 201-327-7822 (ask for G.A.).

Tennessee: Looking for player/judges in the Gibson County area. I am experienced at the AD&D game, the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game, and Palladium games. I am also willing to learn any new game. I also desire pen pals from anywhere to discuss recent RPG developments. Write: John H. Goins, 3112 Ennis St., Milan, TN 38358.

General Male gamer, 16 years old, seeks pen pals familiar with the D&D game, STAR FRONTIERS game, and others. Please write: Gary Walk, RR 1 Box 331, Neoga, IL 62447.

General I am an experienced gamer looking for a pen pal in the US or UK, any age or sex. I play the AD&D game, the D&D game, as well as MERP, Mega-Traveller, Shadowrun, RuneQuest, Judge Dredd, and a few others. I also play a lot of PBM games, including Monster Island, Quest, Adventure Kings, Beyond the Stellar Empire, and more. Please contact: Jonathan Emmett, Imberhorne Farm, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 1TX England.

General We're looking for writers interested in having articles reviewed for publication in a new RPG 'Zine. Other specific inquiries are welcome. Send SASE and/or articles to Barry Osser, Editor, P.O. Box 6208, Eureka, CA 95502-6208.

General I would like to correspond with serious GMs of the AD&D game and the Star Wars game. I am also looking for a person with whom to write an RPG. Write: David Nunez, 904 Garden City Heights, Lonsdale Way, Pinelands, 7405, South Africa.

General 54° 40′ Orphyte is pleased to offer a 10% discount to Network members on Timemaster and other game products, including the hard- to-find Blackmorn Manor board game. For information on our products write: 54° 40′ Orphyte, Inc., P.O. Box 2108, Naperville, Illinois 60567-2108. MC and V accepted.

General: Male gamer, 16 years old, living in lonely Germany. I am looking for a pen pal, male or female. I play the AD&D game. I especially like the FORGOTTEN REALMS world. I am also familiar with the SPELLJAMMER game and DRAGONLANCE™ setting, and the Torg and Robotech games. Please write: Mike Pate, Box 176 USMCA-A, APO NY 09178.

General: I am looking for overseas pen pals. I am always willing to learn a new game. I am also looking for people in the Baldwin County area who are interested in starting a game club. Write to Tommy Hunter, P.O. Box 546, Stapleton, AL 36578.

General: Looking for writers to start a new gaming newsletter. Fiction and nonfiction needed. Payment upon publication. If interested, write to John Sullivan, 1385 Lomas Verdes, Rochester Hills, MI 48306, or call John at (313) 652-7156.

General: For Sale: Back issues of DRAGON™ magazine from #1 to present! Condition guaranteed. Reasonable prices. Also, other RPG stuff, including out-of-print items, such as TSR's War of Wizards and the very first edition (brown box) of the D&D game. Send SASE for list to Timothy Stabosz, 3420 N. Manor #128, Lansing, IL 60438, or call (708) 418-0005.

About the Cover

Dinner's served. Artist Gary M. Williams illustrates what it takes to survive in the wilderness—if you're not prepared.

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Volume 11, Number 4
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SPECIAL MODULE FEATURE

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There are two Dooms too many in this alternate Marvel Universe, and it's up to a handful of heroes to determine the fate of Latveria. This issue—pick your characters. Next issue, go to war.

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Picture This!
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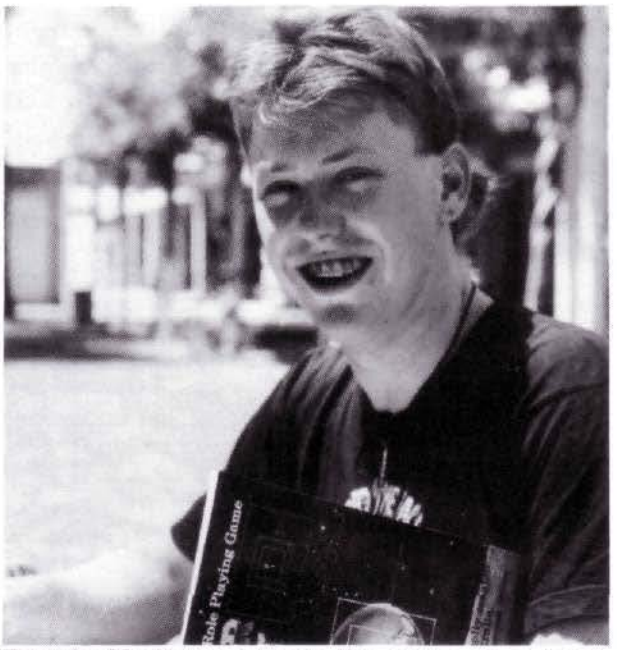
Dean Poisso in character as Wesley Elkstompper, a berserking dwarf at Orccon in Los Angeles, CA.

Wes Nicholson and his orc bodyguards preside at CanCon in Canberra Australia.



Tarquin Murray assumes the guise of a laser-toting alien in Hunter Planet.

Notes From HQ

From Canberra (Australia) To Colorado

One of the nicest parts of the Network coordinator position is being invited to conventions. In January I attended CanCon in Canberra, Australia, and in February, Ghengis Con in Denver, Colorado.

Although the conventions were far apart geographically, they had a lot of things in common. Gamers, I've discovered, are some of the friendliest people in the world and are a lot alike. Pictures from the conventions appear on the opposite page.

Down Under

CanCon's RPGA™ Network events (as well as the entire convention's activities) were coordinated by Wes Nicholson. Wes, who is also a Network Regional Director—and runs our Australian Branch Office—made sure all of the tournaments were written by Australian gamers, and got several of the authors to oversee the events. Wes had little time to enjoy the convention, running about the grounds of the University of Canberra, where the convention was held, checking on all of the activities, judging an occasional TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game event or Paranoia tournament, and making sure all of the gamers had a good time.

Although all the tournaments were scheduled in classrooms, I took my teams out on the lawn—sometimes under the shade of a large "stringy bark" tree, more often at a picnic table under the hot sun. You see, it was the middle of summer in Australia, and I wanted to be as far removed as possible from memories of Lake Geneva's snow and near-0 temperatures. The gamers thankfully obliged me, while dabbing themselves with sunscreen and fanning character sheets in front of their faces to stay cool.

One session of "Graduation Exercise," the TOP SECRET/S.I. tournament penned by Wes, was especially enjoyable. I judged a team of gamers from Melbourne, who proceeded to pantomime the actions of the agents they were playing—down to using a bench as the Orion van and checking under the hood for anything suspicious. I also was treated to a two-hour session of "Hunter Planet," an Australian-written role-playing game where the player characters are out to collect "hunting souvenirs" from a planet called "Dirt."

But the most memorable part of the convention was the gamers, who aside from their delightful accents and wombat jokes were no different than gamers I'd encountered in the U.S. I heartily recommend taking in an Australian convention if you're looking to mix a vacation with gaming activities. Going Down Under definitely will lift your spirits.

Gunfights A Mile High

Because I spend a lot of my time editing Network tournaments, I don't get to play in them—I know exactly what's going to happen! It's not something I complain about, since I thoroughly enjoy judging the events at various conventions. But every once in a while a convention gets sneaky. The coordinators find a way to circumvent Network HQ by asking a friendly TSR, Inc. book editor to review the scenario or a willing Regional Director. Such was the case with Ghengis Con, where the organizers scheduled me to *play* in a Network BOOT HILL® game event called Columbine's Mine.

The tournament, written by Walt Baas and Kira Glass, was a delightful four hours filled with a grisly hanging, a near-disastrous gunfight, and a trek to Denver where my character posed as the notorious outlaw Black Bart. I think game master Jay Tummelson was being kind to let me get away with the stunt.

Columbine's Mine was part of the Network clubs' Decathlon. And the clubs PM Players, Midwest Masters, and Saige captured first place points!

Other fun-filled activities included a plethora of other Network events, a murder mystery, and a Puffing Billy Tournament for railroad game enthusiasts. To top off the convention, the weather was terrific—60-degrees and not an inch of snow on the ground!

Don't Just Sit There

The bottom line to all my ramblings this issue is—attend conventions. They are a lot of fun, chances are you can find one within driving distance of your home town, and they are a great way to make new friends.

The biggest gaming convention of all is coming up real soon. The GEN CON® Game Fair in Milwaukee, WI, will feature more than three dozen Network tournaments.

Wes Nicholson, Walt Baas, Kira Glass, Jay Tummelson, and thousands upon thousands of other gamers are going. You'll see the Network staff there, too.

Take Care,
Jean ❑

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Survival 101

Shoe Leather And Smooth Stones For Dinner

by Elizabeth and Gary Williams

Aedh was in a pickle.

Half of her adventuring group was dead. One surviving member was missing an arm. They had no treasure to show for their troubles. And it was all because the group lost the pack animals—that were carrying all their food, supplies, and weapons.

The most high representative of Aedh's god *suggested* rather strongly that she take a beginning survival course before striking out again. She agreed and soon found herself sitting in a large room with 26 other students. There were no chairs, only some mats spaced unevenly on the floor.

Aedh studied the five banners hanging from the ceiling opposite the door. The wall to the back of the room was mirrored. Just about the time she finished her observations, a tall, balding human entered; he appeared a cross between an old drill sergeant and a bad nightmare. He stopped in front of the banners, bowed, then turned and addressed the group.

"I'm Sir Buddy. I am **not** your friend, so listen up. Your life may depend on it. This class covers the basics in survival. And the first lesson is wearing the proper clothing. If you are going to the Great Frozen Wasteland, you should **not** be dressed for desert exploration! Adventuring in any environment where you are not native should make you extra careful when it comes to outfitting yourself. Standard dress for adventuring consists of underclothing, pants, shirts, and boots. What they are made of—cotton, wool, or silk—and how many layers you put on, could save you."

"Sir?" Aedh approached. "My god requires that all worshipers wear kilts."

"Do you want to survive?" came the reply.

"Yes!"

"Well, then, wear pants under your kilt. Use your common sense! Do you hear me?"

There was silence in the room.

"I said, do you hear me?"

"Yes sir!" Aedh blurted out seconds before her classmates chimed in.

"What type of foot covering you need depends on how and where you are traveling and what you are going to do once you get there. Center-seamed moccasins are best for woodlands. They're soft and will let you climb trees if you need to. Soft, knee-high boots are great for the desert. You'll be able to feel the shifting sand under your feet. Waterproof boots are appropriate for the wetlands. Keep your feet dry and you won't have to worry about blisters. Quilted or fur boots are what you want for the frozen wastelands. If your feet are warm, you won't lose your toes to the bite of Old Man Frost.

"When in the wetlands, stay dry. Change your clothing whenever you get wet. Stay warm while in the frozen wastelands. Layers of clothes will be more help than a blanket. And in the desert, keep the sun off your head with a cloth and wear loose clothing. Stay clean in the forest. You can pick up all kinds of nasty pests that are attracted to unclean bodies."

Sir Buddy paced in front of the students. "Second lesson of survival is night warmth. Standard blankets will keep you comfortable until it freezes, then you will want something thick and furry—wool is best for cleanliness, but furs will do. A *blanket of ever-warmth* or a *ring of warmth* is wonderful, but they are not always available. Buying a floor length cape that can double as another blanket is also a very good idea.

"And there's more, of course. Putting your fire in a three-foot by three-foot by one-foot deep pit will keep the druids happy because it doesn't threaten the forest, and it will let you sleep closer to the flames. If you are in the desert, travel by night and sleep in a pit during the day. Don't forget to build a covering over your pit to keep the sun from boiling your brains.

"Does everyone understand?"

Silence.

"Fools." Sir Buddy looked down his long nose at the nervous students, adjusted his shirt, and continued.

"The third lesson of survival is water. Take as much clean water as you think you'll need—and refill your bottles at **every** opportunity. You can survive a few days without food, but **not** without water. Always take an extra week's supply of rations with you, too. If you need them, you've got them. Never, ever, trust your luck with hunting while on a march. You'll always be disappointed. You need at least two days in an area before you learn the game trails, and you likely won't have that kind of time."

The gruff instructor paused and reached deep into his pocket, producing a large, flattened leaf. "Five plants out of 20 can be used as food. One out of 20 will be poisonous. One also will have some medicinal uses. The rest are just animal fodder. All grain plants can be cooked and eaten. Berries that are very juicy, leave a stain on your hands, and have many seeds can be eaten. Nuts that have a sweet taste are safe to eat, but if the nut is bitter, soak it in clean water for two days, dry it, then grind it to a flour. It is then ready to eat. Any root that is larger than your thumb can be consumed. Learn to recognize at least six food plants and one medicinal plant for your own protection.

"If you have pack animals, remember to take extra food for them, as they won't be able to graze or hunt. In extreme cases, you can kill and eat one of your animals, but then the other pack animals will have a greater fear of you and will be harder to control." (There is a 10% chance per pack animal killed that the other pack animals will panic and attempt to leave.)

He pushed the leaf back into his pocket and eyed Aedh. "Remember to split up your supplies. No one should be carrying all of any particular article. Everyone, and your animals, should be carrying enough so if the group splits you can survive on what you have in your packs. That way if you lose a party member or an animal the rest of you won't starve."

"What if you run out of food?" an inquisitive young man posed.

"Then you can heat and chew on leather, but it won't taste good, and it will only stop your hunger pangs for a few minutes after you stop chewing. A clean pebble held in your mouth will help your thirst when you run out of water. Are there any more questions on what I've covered so far?"

Silence.

"Idiots," Sir Buddy mumbled. "The

last lesson in survival is finding the direction to travel. Remember that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Moss grows on the north side of trees if you are above the equator, south if you are below it. Likewise, streams flow south above the equator and north below the equator."

"What's an equator?" an apprentice wizard whispered.

"Great lord, give me strength. People usually live near a stream or creek. Towns and cities are usually next to a river. The Great Guiding Star is always in the north, so if you want to go south, keep the star directly behind you. Also, the red star that comes out at dusk, The Watcher, is always in the east about the level with the horizon. Now, any more questions?"

Silence.

"Harumph." Sir Buddy indicated the door. "Check the list on the front steps of the school for more detailed classes, such as Wetlands Survival 202, Plant Identification 301, and Killing Your Own Meat 304. Pick up your certificates in the office. Class dismissed."

There was a stampede to the door. But after everyone left, Aedh snuck back to the doorway, hoping to ask a question or two about Sir Buddy's experiences. She spotted a green-clothed elf talking to her instructor. She was puzzled, since she did not see anyone enter.

"Kumar, did I get through to them?" Buddy scratched his head.

"Perhaps," the elf answered. "At least enough to make them cautious the next time. Besides, how many adventures were you involved in before you learned some sense?"

Aedh backed away quietly when Sir Buddy sputtered and the elf laughed. She resolved to sign up for at least two more classes before venturing out into the wilderness again.

Sir Buddy

14th Level Male Human Ranger

STR: 13
INT: 15
WIS: 17
DEX: 14
CON: 14
CHA: 10

AC Normal: 7
Hit Points: 81

Alignment: Neutral Good
Height: 6'5"
Weight: 229 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Balding (what little is left looks gray)/Gray
Age: 49

Weapon Proficiencies: Composite long bow, dagger, quarter staff, bastard sword
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Animal handling (18), survival (20), directional sense (18), tracking (21), hunting (17)
Languages: Common, Elvish, Orcish, Goblin

Magic Items: *Ring of protection +3, cloak of elvenkind*

Spells Carried: (First level) *Animal friendship, entangle, locate animals or plants;* (second level) *charm person or mammal, speak with animals;* (third level) *hold animal, plant growth*

Sir Buddy is lean and extremely tenacious, seeming at times like an old bull dog. He has lost all his hair above his ears; what remains ringing the back of his head is kept military short. He usually wears a clean, long-sleeved tunic of earth colors, baggy drawstring pants, and center-seamed moccasins.

Born to farmers who were barely making ends meet, Buddy learned early to hunt for extra food to help feed the family. However, he respected nature, only killing as much as the family could eat in one day. On one of his hunting forays he discovered (or was discovered by, depending on who tells the story) Kumar, an elven ranger who was recovering from a not-so-successful adventure. Recognizing a kindred spirit, Kumar began teaching Buddy ranger skills.

They adventured together for many years until the pair fell into an underground cavern. Buddy broke his hips, and Kumar was seriously injured. Knowing that they could not adventure any longer, Buddy set up a school to teach survival skills. The school did rather poorly until a few local youths discovered a treasure map. The young men knew the adventure was beyond their capabilities, so they asked Buddy to teach them, promising to split the recovered treasure as payment. Buddy outfitted them with supplies, put them through a grueling three-month course, and sent them on their way.

Six months later the youths returned; Buddy's share of the treasure was enough to support the school for the next 25 years.

The school moved into better quarters and expanded, boasting a teaching staff of four. Sir Buddy lives on the premises with some of the advanced students. ❑

Stop By For A Spell

New Magic For AD&D® Second Edition Game Priests

by Bryan E. Manahan

Find Underground Water
(Divination)

Level: 1
Sphere: Divination
Range: 30 yards + 10 yards/level
Components: V,S,M
Duration: 3 turns
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

The priest employing this spell is able to detect subterranean reservoirs of water, provided the reservoir holds at least 10 gallons and is within range. The priest can tell the water's approximate depth and quality (salty, fresh, safe for consumption or not). The spell does not cause any water to rise to the surface, but can be helpful in locating sites for wells. The material components for this spell are a crystal with a drop of water contained inside, a Y-shaped stick, and the priest's holy symbol. When casting is complete, the caster takes the stick and walks forward at half speed. The stick is not consumed in the casting.

Protection
(Alteration) Reversible

Level: 1
Sphere: Protection
Range: Touch
Components: V,S,M
Duration: 6 rounds
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell confers a protective magic, just as a *ring of protection,* to another creature or to the caster. The defensive bonus, which applies to saving throws and armor class, is +1 with an additional +1 for every six levels of experience the caster has attained, to a maximum of +3. If the caster has the ability to bestow more than one "plus," he can divide it between two or three recipients in any way he desires. For example, a 19th level priest could grant himself protection +3, or he could divide the effects of the spell giving himself +1 and +2 to a companion—or +1 to two companions. The caster must touch each recipient.

The reverse of this spell, *vulnerability,* causes a penalty to saving throws and armor class. A caster who can inflict penalties of −2 or −3 can affect multiple opponents, provided he can touch each victim on the round the spell is cast (usually easier said than done). Both versions of the spell affect only humans, demi-humans, and monsters of generally humanoid shape. The material components for this spell are the caster's holy symbol and a drop of holy water (or a pinch of rust for the reverse).

Cure Intermediate Wounds
(Necromantic) Reversible

Level: 3
Sphere: Healing
Range: Touch
Components: V,S,M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: Creature touched
Saving Throw: None

This spell is similar to the first level spell, *cure light wounds.* It allows the caster to heal 2-12 (2d6) of a creature's lost hit points. This healing cannot affect noncorporeal, nonliving, or extraplanar creatures.

The spell's reverse, *cause intermediate wounds,* operates similarly to the *cause light wounds* spell. If successfully touched, the victim suffers 2d6 points of damage.

Decay
(Alteration)

Level: 3
Sphere: Necromantic, Plant
Range: 30 yards
Components: V,S,M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

Upon casting this spell, the caster can cause a single dead creature to decompose into dust. The spell also can decompose 10 cubic feet or less of dead plant material, including objects made of wood. Items or constructions made entirely or partially of plant material (such as wood) must save vs. lightning or be destroyed. Any item worn or held by a creature is unharmed unless the possessor fails a saving throw vs. magic; upon failure the items must save vs. lightning or be destroyed. This spell will not affect living matter. However, it can cause a single, corporeal undead creature of up to 11 hit dice to decompose into dust if it fails a saving throw vs. death magic. The spell cannot effect noncorporeal undead (ghosts, shadows, wraiths, specters, etc.) or undead with more than 11 hit dice. The material component for this spell is the priest's holy symbol.

Quicksand
(Alteration)

Level: 3
Sphere: Elemental (Earth)
Range: 60 yards
Components: V,S,M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: 500 cubic feet + 50 cubic feet/level
Saving Throw: None

This spell causes sand, fine gravel, or soft earth to become quicksand. The spell also affects soft stone, clay, or coarse gravel, but the area of effect is halved. The spell has no effect on worked stone or hard, natural stone such as granite, basalt, quartz, and feldspar. All types of gemstones are unaffected.

There is no reverse of this spell, but *transmute mud to rock* converts the quicksand into soft sandstone; *dispel magic* does not affect the quicksand. If the quicksand does not have an ample supply of water to keep it wet and thin, it dries up and turns to fine sand at a rate of 10 cubic feet per hour. The material components for this spell are the priest's holy symbol, a drop of water, and a pinch of sand.

Torban's Hammer
(Invocation)

Level: 3
Sphere: Combat
Range: 0
Components: V,S
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This is a more powerful version of the *spiritual hammer* spell. It was first granted to the adventuring priest Torban. The spell brings into being a great, magical hammer which appears in the caster's hands when the spell is completed; the caster must wield it personally, or it fades. The *hammer* is a +2 magical weapon that inflicts 1d8+2 points of damage to opponents of any size. The caster can wield the *hammer* with no non-proficiency penalty, and any combat bonuses the caster has due to strength apply normally. The *hammer* has a speed factor of 4 and cannot be entangled by items such as whips or bolas—they simply slip off.

Protection from Corrosives
(Alteration)

Level: 4
Sphere: Protection
Range: Touch
Components: V,S,M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 7
Area of Effect: Creature touched
Saving Throw: None

This spell makes the recipient highly resistant to damage from acid, alkali, and other corrosives, such as black dragon breath. The recipient gains a +3 saving throw bonus to corrosive attacks. The recipient takes half damage from corrosives even if his saving throw fails, and quarter damage if the save is successful. The material component for this spell is the priest's holy symbol and a shard of glass.

Detoxify
(Alteration) Reversible

Level: 5
Sphere: Protection, Healing
Range: Touch
Components: V,S
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 8
Area of Effect: Creature touched or 1 cubic foot/level
Saving Throw: Special

This spell allows the caster to detoxify any harmful, toxic substance by touch, and is similar to the *neutralize poison* spell. Further, creatures or objects which generate poison can be rendered non-venomous for 3d4 hours.

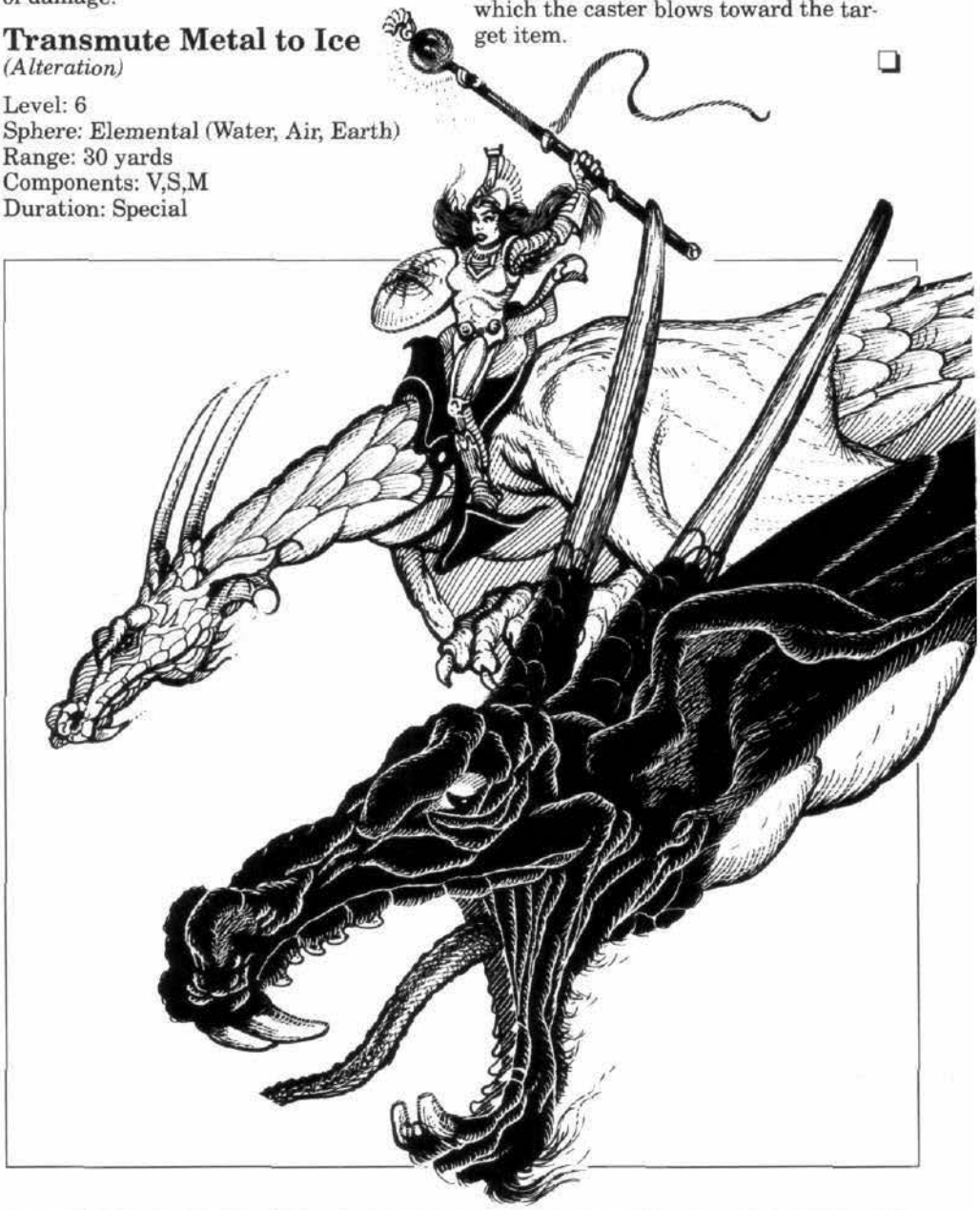
When the spell is cast on someone who suffers an additional poisonous, corrosive, or intoxicating attack during the same round, those subsequent attacks cause half damage (if his saving throw is failed) or no damage (if the saving throw succeeds).

This spell's reverse, *death toxin*, requires the victim must save vs. poison or die in 1d4 rounds. If the save succeeds, the victim suffers 2d8+1 points of damage.

Transmute Metal to Ice
(Alteration)

Level: 6
Sphere: Elemental (Water, Air, Earth)
Range: 30 yards
Components: V,S,M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 metal object
Saving Throw: Special

This spell allows the caster to change metal objects into solid ice. Magical objects have only a 5% chance of being affected by this spell, and any object on a creature's person receives the creature's saving throw. The target object's weight cannot exceed five pounds per experience level of the caster. The ice created by this spell remains until it melts into water. A *wish* or *limited wish* spell can restore the item, but *dispel magic* cannot. The material component for this spell is a small amount of powdered granite, quartz, or oak bark, which the caster blows toward the target item. ❑



With Great Power

The Doom Wars, Part I

by Steven E. Schend

From some heroes' perspectives there are two Dooms too many—although the loyal citizens of Latveria are largely unaware of their multiple monarchs.

No more! In an alternate Marvel world two handfuls of champions have the power to affect Doomdom. The heroes involved, and background on the Dooms, appear in this issue. Pick a side and a character, find a Game Master, and wait for next issue for the war to begin.

Dooming Them All

Victor Von Doom has been a deposed monarch for several years, his throne usurped by none other than Dr. Doom himself! Victor has woven scheme upon scheme during his life, with one of those plans going awry. His goal to live beyond his own death worked too well.

Victor programmed one of his robots to imprint his own memories and brain engrams onto his adopted son, Kristoff. When Victor was presumed dead, the robot followed its programming and Kristoff essentially *became* Dr. Doom.

Kristoff (referred to as Doom II) has inherited Victor Von Doom's arrogant pride, a serious flaw. And Doom II halted the memory transfer process before it was complete, thus gaining only partial knowledge of his foes and the world around him.

For example, Kristoff only has Victor's early memories of the Fantastic Four, plus his own more recent experiences; for chronology buffs, Kristoff Doom's memories cover Doom's origin to Fantastic Four #10. Once, he failed to destroy the Fantastic Four because he literally did not know about the Invisible Woman's force field. Doom II was captured and stripped of his armored exoskeleton by the Fantastic Four.

At the time, Victor was believed dead at the hands of Tyros the Terrible and the Silver Surfer, his body reduced to atoms during a clash between the wielders of the Power Cosmic. In truth, Victor transferred his mind into a bystander's body, and soon took steps to recreate his own form. After the Beyonder returned Doom to his rightful body, Victor soon attempted to use Franklin Richards' mutant abilities to free his mother's spirit from Mephisto's nether realm. During Franklin's kidnapping, Doom II managed to free himself and also return to Latveria.

After Doom's plans with Franklin dissolved, he found that Doom II had seized the reins of power in Latveria. Victor Von Doom was forced out of his country, an exiled leader defeated by one of his own plans. Since Doom II's rise to power, the two Dooms have clashed a number of times. Both have used pawns and hirelings, and neither has had much success against the other. Until now:

Gaming On Earth-Doom

For the past year or so, the overt clashes between the two Dooms have reached a state of detente. However, both have been busy preparing for another confrontation. This conflict has not yet happened within the pages of Marvel Comics, nor is it likely to occur—it will unfold here and in your games. This "Doom War" is considered a "What If?" scenario, and does not belong on the "official" Marvel Earth.

Events in *Fantastic Four #350* further set this game away from the "official" Marvel Universe. GMs can fold in events from #350 if they desire, considering Doom I to be a robot with an expanded logic circuit.

GMs easily can use their own worlds and campaign versions of Europe and Latveria to be the settings for the Doom Wars. If your campaigns are firmly entrenched in the existing Marvel Universe, why not have your heroes pulled into an extradimensional warp by one of the Dooms' machines? No matter what world it's played on, the Doom Wars campaign is certain to change the ways your players view the Doctors Doom.

This campaign pits Doom I against Doom II, with Latveria and the player characters caught in between. Players can run characters which, for one reason or another, are allied with the deposed Victor Von Doom in his bid to free Latveria from the iron grip of "the imposter." Players also could operate characters from the other side, allied with Doom II to protect Latveria from the incursion of "the imposter." Both sides of characters are provided below. If you desire, players can use their regular characters instead, running into the Latverian champions as NPCs.

Ambitious GMs can set players on both sides, and let the player characters fight each other to decide who controls Latveria!

Victor von Doom's Allies

Cardinal

Scott Denham, mutant

F EX
A RM
S EX
E IN
R TY
I EX
P TY
Health: 110
Karma: 32

Powers:
Flight: Cardinal flies on red, birdlike wings attached to his back. He can reach Remarkable (30) speeds (15 areas/rd). He flies silently, allowing him to blindside opponents who are unaware of his location or attack. Cardinal can carry up to 300 pounds while flying (this weight reduces his speed by 1CS).
Deflector Field: Cardinal can generate a personal force field around his body of Excellent (20) intensity. While this field is up, Cardinal cannot be entangled or held due to the field's slippery qualities. If in flight, the field allows Cardinal to fly at Amazing (50) speeds due to its frictionless surface. Cardinal can breathe normally through the field, but he can only maintain it for 20 turns (2 minutes) before it fails and he must wait for 1-10 turns before he can reactivate it. This power is used to give Cardinal quick bursts of speed as well as protection.

Talents: Acrobatics, Aerial Combat, Archaeology, Martial Arts E

History: Scott Denham is the son of Josef and Rosa Denham, immigrant Latverian/Americans who grew rich in the real estate market after moving to the United States in the 1940s. While living on an isolated ranch in Colorado, Scott was raised to revel in his mutant powers, growing to be a hero of Meeker, the small town where he grew up. In 1989, he went to college to pursue archaeology. On campus, he was found and recruited by Dr. Doom, who was "... in need of good noble souls to free Latveria from the despot who rules in my name. For your aid, I will grant you a rare chance to catalog and study the centuries-old royal treasures of Latveria. Fear not for your studies or work here in the West, for I give you my word that you can return after loaning your services to my cause for the nonce."

Cardinal has never kept his mutant abilities secret. He is so friendly and outgoing that many people do not exhibit fear or mistrust around him, as they do around other mutants.

Charioteer

Lawrence "Larry" Tylas, high-tech wonder

F IN
A EX
S GD/RM
E RM/IN
R RM
I TY
P GD
Health: 100/110
Karma: 46

Powers:
Body Suit: All of Charioteer's powers are derived from this suit. The suit increases Strength (+2CS) and Endurance (+1CS); the numbers after the slash are the enhanced scores.
Body Armor: Charioteer's metallic-fiber suit grants Excellent protection from physical attacks, Remarkable resistance to heat and cold, and Incredible protection from energy attacks.
Energy Detection: Charioteer's helmet can identify and track electrical energy trails with Excellent ability.
Energy Shield: The suit's right forearm contains a generator that produces an oval plane of green energy three feet high and two feet wide. This shield automatically absorbs or reflects 40 points of energy attacks each round, provided they hit Charioteer on his shielded side. On any round he absorbs at least 30 points of energy, Charioteer can use it one of three ways: boost air speed to Excellent for 2-20 turns, extend life support for 2-20 turns, or increase his strength to Amazing for 2-20 turns. Once one of these augmentations is used it cannot be used again until its duration expires. Reflected energy strikes the attacker if Charioteer makes a successful Agility feat.
Flight: The suit includes boots which unfold into a sky sled (Incredible Control, Typical Body, Good Air Speed) in one turn. Charioteer controls the sled cybernetically, and his feet cannot be removed from the sled unless it is disassembled (pressure seals in the boots lock on while the sled is deployed).
Life Support: Charioteer's helmet and armor contain life support mechanisms which allow for Excellent life support (20 turns).

Talents: Acrobatics, Electronics, Martial Arts A & E, Mechanical Engineering

History: A former judo and martial arts enthusiast and college gymnastics champion, Larry Tylas is well known for his physical and athletic accomplishments. However, many tend to overlook Larry's inherent grasp of electronics, assuming him to be another "dumb jock." During his graduate school days and in his post-doctoral studies, he designed and developed a strength-enhancing exoskeleton for use by police and peacekeeping forces against superhuman opponents.

He designed and partially built the prototype "Peacekeeper" armor, but needed more funding to complete his work. Offered financial backing by Roxxon—with many strings attached—Tylas refused to work for the powerful conglomerate, wanting to maintain total control over the armor's use.

Doom anonymously acted as his benefactor and provided funds for the armor's completion, along with additional designs to integrate into the suit's systems. Doom's designs incorporated a collapsible sky sled like Tyros' (see Fantastic Four #259, 260) in the boots, granting flight to the suit. Once the suit was finished, the mysterious benefactor made his wishes and identity known. Doom considered his funding and additional design payment for Tylas' "freeing" Latveria.

Tylas, upon finishing his project and the sled, renamed his armor the Charioteer suit. His helmet has a top brush reminiscent of a Roman chariot driver. He resents Doom's manipulations and regrets becoming an ally to this villain. Regardless, he will work with Doom and the others, honorably keeping his word and his part of the bargain. Doom's plans for this young inventor and his armor are unknown at this time.

Huntsman

Boris, unknown (mutant or alien?)

F GD
A EX
S EX
E IN
R TY
I EX
P GD
Health: 90
Karma: 36

Powers:
Animal Communication and Control: Huntsman has the ability to communicate with and control wolves with Incredible (40) ability. He can control up to his Rank number of wolves while he travels with the pack; otherwise, he can only control 2-20 wolves by communicating with and influencing the pack leader.
Animal Transformation Self: Huntsman can transform into a gigantic timber wolf. Due to his permanent growth power, his abilities are as follows for wolf form:

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
EX	RM	EX	IN	TY	RM	GD

As a wolf, Huntsman can move 3 areas/turn, attack on the Edged Attack table with his bite, and track with Excellent ability.
Call of the Pack: Huntsman can emit a howl which acts as a specialized Teleport Others, summoning 2-20 wolves in 1-10 rounds to within 5 areas of himself. These summoned wolves will be Friendly contacts to Huntsman. The Call cannot summon wolves from greater than 50 miles away.
Growth: Huntsman has a permanent Growth power of Poor intensity, granting him a 10-foot stature at all times.
Regeneration: Huntsman regenerates his Endurance rank each minute, regaining 30 points in 10 turns, if he gets a chance to rest.

Talents: Acrobatics, Hunting, Wrestling

History: Boris, code named Huntsman by Doom, has no memory of where he came from or how he grew up. His only memories are those of being in the forest with his "friends and brothers," the wolves. His body is criss-crossed with numerous scars and marks, and a tattoo is easily spotted on his stomach—two fierce eyes over a row of teeth. He knows nothing about it, or when (or if) it was made. However, this doesn't worry Boris, who knows worrying will not make it go away.

Huntsman became involved in the Doom Wars when much of his pack was killed to clear room for Kristoff's mutant training camp. Although this angered him, he could not penetrate the camp's defenses, let alone destroy and remove it from the pack's territory. However, he easily defeated a guardbot that was going to kill a downed woman, Mask/Anya. The two developed a close friendship, and they endured the hardships of life on the run from Doom II. They eventually made their way to America and formed an alliance with Victor.

Huntsman does not like Doom I, though he respects the deposed monarch much as a wolf respects the pack leader. He cares little for who sits on the throne; he simply wants peace to return after he gets revenge for his slain brothers.

Mask

Anya Rodinas, mutant

F TY
A EX
S PR
E EX
R PR
I EX
P EX
Health: 50
Karma: 44

Powers:
Invisibility: Mask can become invisible at Shift X rank. When using this power, she is invisible to normal sight, heat sensors, ultraviolet sensors, and any visibility-oriented detection powers save magical or mental detections. She is not invisible to motion sensors or olfactory senses. Once activated, this power functions until deactivated. However, if Mask suffers damage while invisible she must make a Yellow Psyche FEAT to remain invisible.
Phasing: Mask can phase with Incredible ability; the only power stunts she has established are disrupting electronics and walking on air at normal speed.
Sound Absorption: Mask can absorb sounds of up to Incredible intensity within 3 areas. With a Yellow FEAT roll, she can limit her sound dampening power to 1 area, and a Red FEAT roll reduces the power to personal effect, allowing her to move in total silence.
Limitation: Mask only can use one of her powers at a time.

Talents: Mask speaks English, German, Hungarian, Latverian, Symkarian, and Russian. Her other talents include: Trivia (gypsy lore) and Performer-singer

History: The daughter of Pietro and Valeria Rodinas, Anya Rodinas was born into the gypsy bands which populated the forests of Latveria and Symkaria. When she turned 14, her mutant powers became apparent, and her father taught her how to keep her powers under control. Pietro had the power to absorb sound, though his ability was never as powerful as Anya's.

Seven months ago the gypsies were forced out of their traditional homeland forests by a joint Symkarian/Latverian agreement. About the same time, Doom II's robots also separated a number of young mutants from their comrades. They were all put into a new training camp in the western hills. Anya's father and a few of the older mutants rebelled, and in the confusion Anya escaped to the forests. From a safe vantage, she watched helplessly as her father and some of her comrades were killed.

Anya avoided her mechanical pursuers, but unfortunately had been fitted with a "communication shackle," which sent tremendous pain through her once she moved away from the camp. Through sheer force of will, she managed to drag herself away. Her escape was threatened when a guardbot on patrol found her. However, a large wolf attacked and defeated the construct. The next thing Anya remembered was a huge, unkempt man kneeling nearby, watching her intently. The fragments of her shackle lay on the ground with the wreckage of the robot. Anya found this man fascinating; his appearance marked him as a forest dweller, but she had never seen him before—men 10 feet tall are easy to remember! He spoke only Russian, and he complained that the training camp disturbed his brothers. After a few more close calls, Anya found this man, who called himself Boris, to be closer to wolves than humans. Despite some small fears, she returned in his company to her gypsy camp. During their travels they cemented an alliance which is quickly growing into friendship.

Valeria persuaded a gypsy witch to help Anya find an ally against "Doom's sad madness, and to return Latveria to her proper state." Victor was located in America, and Anya and Boris were magically transported to him to help in the restoration of order and harmony to the tiny Balkan nation.

Anya freely aids the "true son of the gypsies" and hopes Doom I can return Latveria to normal so she can resume her peaceful life. Victor is quite taken with Anya, as she appears every bit like her mother, who is Victor's former lover. Anya tends to stay close to Boris, knowing he needs a friend to keep him in control.

Anya, named Mask by Doom I, dislikes her role as a heroine, but puts aside her fears and dislikes for the good of her people and homeland.

The Latverian Protectorate

Combat

Wanda Stavros, mutant

F RM
A IN
S GD
E RM
R PR
I RM
P GD
Health: 110
Karma: 44

Powers:
Combat Sense: Combat has this power at Amazing rank. When she uses this, her pupils disappear and her eyes become solid white.
Darkforce Generation: Combat can use this only at Feeble level, generating enough dark matter to cover her body. She uses this power to camouflage herself in shadowy areas (−3CS to detection).
Lightning Speed: She can move at Incredible speeds, moving 7 areas/round.
Ultimate Skill/Martial Arts A: Combat's fighting style uses her opponents' force against them, similar to judo. She can Stun or Slam with Unearthly ability regardless of Strength and Endurance scores.

Talents: Wrestling, Tumbling, Espionage/detective

History: This woman, born Diana Athena Stavros, is currently not in her right mind. A former SHIELD agent from Greece, she served the agency well in its original incarnation. She disappeared on a mission in Hungary shortly before the Deltite incident which caused the original SHIELD organization to collapse. She was presumed dead after an informant allegedly shot and disposed of her.

Her "murder" was an elaborate staging by specialized robots of Kristoff's; Stavros soon was secretly brought into Latveria and subjected to brainwashing. Her "memories" now tell her she is a native Latverian, and a loyal and highly placed agent for the Master. She has recently begun to question why she is the only experienced espionage agent for Doom in his own country; the more she questions her false memories, the greater her chances of breaking the brainwashing (Yellow Psyche FEAT when encountering something which contradicts her "memory").

With her powers and her experience, she has assumed command of the Latverian Protectorate. She dislikes the public nature of her position, but firmly believes in the group's role as protectors of the homeland. She is very calm and collected at all times, with a rather cold attitude on the surface. A stern leader, she expects perfection from those she leads. The only time she seems to enjoy herself is in a fight, taking pleasure from her brutal ballet with her opponent, and in the company of Herald, the soft-spoken precog of the team.

Herald

Erik Holostoff, mutant

F TY
A GD
S GD
E EX
R PR
I EX
P RM
Health: 46
Karma: 54

Powers:
Astral Form: Herald can project his astral form away from his body with Amazing ability, and can travel 20 areas in astral form.
Precognition: Herald has Incredible precognition powers, but his flashes of the future appear to him only in dreams. While asleep, the GM makes a FEAT roll for Herald to determine what he sees. A Green result shows something happening within 10 minutes; a Yellow result reveals an incident which will happen within five hours; a Red result reveals a scene or incident which will occur within 24 hours.
Psi-Screen: Herald has a Psi-Screen of Incredible integrity.
Telepathy: Herald's telepathic powers are of Amazing rank, allowing him to contact minds up to 20 areas away. He can easily maintain communications with targets whose Psyches are less than Amazing. His only established power stunt is a team mind-link, which allows Combat to instantly give orders to the team and monitor the battles. He has not yet learned to project a psionic force or even a mind probe.

Talents: Farming, Martial Arts B

History: Herald is the eldest son of a Latverian family whose three children are mutants. His powers have been active for five years, and he has a great degree of control over them. When Doom II came to the family farm and

offered to train all the children to use their powers, Erik resisted the idea, but joined the others, who had not yet fully accepted their powers nor learned to control them.

Herald remains at the training camp, preferring to stay out of combat and guard his little sister Katrina. He is quite watchful of his siblings; he and Protector do not get along due to this protectiveness. Herald has become attracted to Combat, though he has yet to make his feelings known to her.

Jinx

Katrina Holostoff, mutant

F PR
A TY
S PR
E EX
R TY
I GD
P GD
Health: 34
Karma: 36

Powers
Probability Manipulation—Bad Luck: Jinx's bad luck powers have Remarkable intensity and affect everyone within 1 area. Her power is constant unless artificially inhibited.
Teleport Others: Jinx has Remarkable teleportation powers, but her control is minimal (see Limitations). If her Psyche FEAT is successful, roll on the Remarkable column to determine the distance the target is teleported. A White result indicates a teleport distance of 1 area, Green indicates 3 areas, and Yellow or Red results send targets the maximum distance of 6 areas away.

Jinx always teleports people directly away from her. Targets cannot pass through or appear inside solid objects. If an object blocks the teleport, the target is teleported to the object then upward one area for each unused area of teleportation. For example, if Cardinal was forcibly teleported 5 areas away from her, and there is a building 3 areas away, he teleports to the building's nearest edge and 2 areas up in the air.
Limitations: Jinx cannot use her teleport power voluntarily; she teleports everyone within her area away in a random, horizontal direction. She must make a Yellow or Red Psyche FEAT to use the power.

Talents: Botany

History: Jinx is a small, shy girl of 17 who was born and raised near Doomstadt. She has never traveled beyond Latveria, and before coming to the training camp she had never ventured farther than 20 miles from her home. She has an almost blind faith in her older brothers, Herald and Protector, to keep her from any harm. Her powers frighten her and she is too insecure to stand up to anyone forceful unless she or one of her brothers is physically threatened. Until Jinx learns to control her powers, she remains at the camp to avoid any mishaps.

Jinx and her brothers are working for Doom willingly; their parents are now staff workers in Castle Doom, and many of their relatives are faithful to the Master.

Oceanus

Benjamin Amelitt, mutant

F EX
A EX
S GD
E EX
R GD
I GD
P EX
Health: 70
Karma: 40

Powers:
Water Animation and Control: Oceanus has the Remarkable ability to animate and control water. Power stunts he has established are: creation of a whirlpool of Remarkable intensity (1 area of effect); watery arms and hands of Excellent Strength; pull all water within 2 areas to a specific target point within 2 areas of Oceanus (tidal wave effect).
Water Blasts: Oceanus can create missiles of water out of the moisture in the air with Excellent ability. These missiles strike with Power rank range and damage.
Water Form: Oceanus can transform his body into a humanoid-shaped liquid form, capable of walking about like a normal being but having no solidity unless he desires. The powers of this form, are:

•*Body Armor:* Oceanus' liquid form acts as Excellent Body Armor against all energy attacks.

•*Density Manipulation:* Oceanus can alter the density of his liquid form, allowing its consistency to vary from Feeble (normal water) to Remarkable (high density to absorb impacts), while still maintaining its human shape. This power allows Oceanus to be immune to most physical and force attacks since they pass through his body; any heat-or fire-based attacks do not affect his liquid form.

•*Elongation:* Oceanus can stretch his liquid limbs up to 1 area away with Amazing ability.

•*Growth:* Oceanus can pull water from the surrounding air and and add it to his liquid form. This results in a Typical rank Growth.

•*Resistance to Fire and Heat:* Oceanus has Excellent (20) resistance to heat and fire attacks because his liquid form disperses or douses much of the energy immediately upon contact.
Limitation: If Oceanus loses more than half his Health while in Water form, he must make a Yellow Psyche FEAT each time he takes further damage or he will revert to his normal body and suffer the effects of dehydration (−1CS to all physical attributes until water is replenished).

Talents: Brewing, Wrestling

History: Oceanus is an orphaned ward of the state of Latveria; a curfew guard robot killed his mother during King Zorba's reign, and his father died years before in a hunting accident. He was taken in by Josef, the burgemeister, and he has been apprenticed to Josef as a brewmeister. When Doom II began scanning for mutants to recruit, he quickly found Ben, though the mutant's powers were still dormant.

Ben was summoned to Castle Doom on a delivery for Josef, and was ambushed by robots—the same ones that killed his mother. His fear and rage activated his powers, and he easily destroyed the constructs, which pleased Kristoff. Ben was the second mutant to be recruited into the Latverian Protectorate, followed soon by Slipstream and Combat; he remains with the team because of a flowering relationship with Slipstream.

Protector

Mark Holostoff, mutant

F EX
A EX
S IN
E RM
R TY
I GD
P RM
Health: 110
Karma: 46

Powers:
Body Armor: Protector has Incredible

Body Armor against physical and energy attacks.
Energy Bola (Equipment): Protector wields an energy bola designed by Kristoff. If it hits, the target is entangled and an Energy attack of Excellent intensity is released on the trapped figure. The bola has Amazing material strength, and Protector usually carries two of them.
Flight: Protector can fly with Excellent Air Speed.
Invulnerability: Protector has Class 1000 resistance against Radiation.

Talents: Martial Arts D, Weapons Specialist—bola, Resist Domination

History: Protector is 16 years old. He is the youngest son of a Latverian farming family, and brother to Jinx and Herald. Of the three siblings, he has adapted best to Kristoff's persuasiveness and plans for the future. He pursues the study of fighting and warfare, despite a basically pacifistic upbringing. He is constantly at odds with his older brother, who he sees as a spineless weakling, hardly worth the attentions of the great Master, Doom.

To reward Protector's loyalty, Doom II has made him a figurehead. According to Doom II's propaganda, Protector is to Latveria what Captain America is to the United States—he is the country's pride, the country's power, and the country's soul. Regardless of his brash manner and overzealousness (which often hinder his accomplishments in battle), he has embraced the role Doom has set for him, and he strives to live up to the title of Latveria's champion.

Razor

Arthur Von Heinlich, mutant

F GD
A GD
S TY
E EX
R TY
I EX
P AM
Health: 46
Karma: 76

Powers:
Telekinesis—Slashing Missile: Razor has an Incredible telekinetic power which manifests itself along one plane or dimension. This plane of telekinetic force has an extremely sharp edge; Razor's force attack is made on the Throwing, Edged column, and he is just learning to reduce the force of his attacks. The telekinetic force surges at high speed from his mind, though arm and body movements help Razor aim and focus his ability. Each attack follows Razor's arm movements and covers a distance of up to 3 areas. For example, if Razor slashes his arm horizontally in front of him, the force slashes anything at arm height in front of him up to 3 areas away. If he makes Yellow Psyche FEAT, Razor focuses enough to reduce his blast to a straight line; with a Red Psyche FEAT, Razor can mute the damage to Excellent rank.

Talents: Metalworking, Metal Casting

History: Arthur Von Heinlich was Doomstadt's blacksmith for several years and always had a strong sense of loyalty to Doom. After King Zorba's rise to power, Arthur was singled out as a troublemaker; his business suffered due to his "disloyalty to the new republic." Soon, Zorba's madness grew and Arthur was arrested on trumped up charges of conspiracy and plotting to assassinate Zorba.

During his arrest and trial, Arthur suffered severe migraines and frequently passed out from the pain. When the verdict of guilty (assuredly a death sentence) was read to the blacksmith, he exploded in rage, and his latent powers activated. A wave of energy cleaved through the judge's stand and the floor beneath it; luckily, no one was hurt in the telekinetic blast, and it changed the court's mind about what to do with Arthur. He was imprisoned in a vibranium-lined cell in Castle Doom's dungeons and subjected to study and experimentation.

Soon forgotten during Zorba's rule and Victor Von Doom's short reclamation of the throne, he was released by Kristoff, who offered him membership in the Latverian Protectorate. Arthur's loyalty is now with Kristoff, who he believes returned him to life. Still, Razor remains concerned because his ordeal at Zorba's hands leads him to dislike usurpers. Razor is still in training at the camp. He is a proud man, and he wishes to enter Latverian life again and return to his old profession. He is the oldest member of the Protectorate, and acts as a fatherly figure to all.

Slipstream

Tatiana Hyskoldt, mutant

F GD
A RM
S TY
E EX
R GD
I GD
P RM
Health: 56
Karma: 50

Powers:
Air Control: Slipstream manipulates air and wind with Remarkable ability. She can surround herself with Remarkable force winds that act as a Force Field of like intensity against physical attacks. She also can inflict Power rank damage at a range of 8 areas, but this attack is negated by any Force Field. She can fly on self-generated wind at Remarkable speed as an established power stunt.
Density Manipulation: Slipstream can lower her body's density to Shift 0 and become nearly intangible. While in this state, she can boost her Flight speed to Amazing. While her density is reduced, her body is surrounded by an electrical glow. Any contact with Slipstream in her ephemeral state causes Excellent electrical damage each round.

Talents: Baking, Accounting, Acrobatics

History: Tatiana Hyskoldt has been an orphan since age 14. Zorba's Doomsday robots killed her parents during a rampage through Doomstadt (see Fantastic Four #247). The local baker, the widow Stassel, took her in. Tatiana proved to have a good head for numbers and figures, soon becoming the accountant for a number of local shops. Despite a good environment, Tatiana grew stubborn and sullen, desperately wanting to strike out against Latveria's internal and external foes.

When the girl's mutant powers became apparent, word soon spread to Doom II. Tatiana often would be spotted flying about the meadows west of Doomstadt; she was swiftly discouraged from such public displays of power unless she was willing to join The Protectorate. Tatiana eventually agreed, and her powers swiftly developed; she became Slipstream, Mistress of the Air.

Slipstream is obsessed with the idea of keeping Latveria safe from anyone.

Next issue contains a series of short adventures for the characters, statistics on the Dooms, and all the essential information for running your own Doom Wars.

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The Living Galaxy

Role-Playing Rockets: The Spacecraft Player Character, Part One

by Roger E. Moore

I like to run offbeat player characters. I once tried to get the referee in a fantasy campaign to let a friend and me jointly play a two-headed giant. The plan failed to come about, but that didn't dim my enthusiasm for weird characters.

Happily, the world of science-fiction gaming, like that of fantasy gaming, is jammed with bizarre intelligent races of every imaginable sort. But there is one sort of being that I imagine would be the weirdest player character you could have, a real challenge for personality development and a boon for all adventuring groups roaming from planet to planet.

That potential character is the ship in which the other characters are traveling. I'm talking about role-playing the spaceship itself—a thinking spaceship, of course, guided by its onboard computers or a cyborg brain.

Why role-play a spacecraft? Because it's different. Because it adds something new to the game, keeping it fresh and keeping the creative channels open (people who play centaurs in fantasy campaigns know what I mean here).

But wouldn't a spacecraft PC unbalance a campaign? It might, but there are many ways to make it workable, as will be discussed in this and the following installments of *The Living Galaxy.* If you put your mind to it, anything is possible.

Sexism note: For the sake of convenience, I am referring to a spacecraft PC as a "he" in this article. Spacecraft PCs can be role-played as either gender (or as a third or neuter gender, for that matter). The "sex" of the ship PC matters only in the role-playing, not in its capabilities. Just giving the ship a gender is a challenge for any gamer!

From HAL 9000 To Helva

The literature of science fiction is filled with spacecraft able to think and act for themselves. HAL 9000, of *2001: A Space Odyssey,* is probably the most famous computer spacecraft pilot, though HAL caused horrible problems for its crew (as did the M-5 computer placed in charge of the U.S.S. *Enterprise,* in the *Star Trek* TV episode, *The Ultimate Computer*). A more pleasant example is the City Fathers, the all-knowing main computer of the New York spindizzy in James Blish's Cities in Flight series. Self-aware computers appear in Robert Heinlein's *Time Enough For Love,* including a ship's computer, named Dora, which had a female personality. The obnoxiously cheerful computer of the *Heart of Gold,* from the Hitchhiker's Guide series by Douglas Adams, is yet another such creation, though far more humorous than the rest.

Some SF spacecraft are actually cyborgs, each guided by a human brain connected to the ship's systems. Anne McCaffrey's *The Ship Who Sang* is a collection of stories about Helva, a starship run by the brain of a deformed woman; the ship (which, as you'd guess, has an interest in singing and music) reacts to events in very human ways, even developing romantic problems. (*The Ship Who Sang,* by the way, should be required reading for anyone interested in the spacecraft-PC idea, as it provides ideas by the score for role-playing such ships and creating their adventures.) A less positive example is the Organic Mental Core of the starship *Earthling,* in Frank Herbert's *Destination: Void.* The OMC is also a human brain, trained to pilot and maintain the ship in flight. However, it soon decides that it is God and thus should be worshiped, as its consciousness and intelligence far surpass the human level. (This problem has gaming applications, too, as will be discussed later.)

So the idea of an intelligent spacecraft is not new. If role-played well, it obviously would be a valuable addition to any party of spacefarers. But how would you turn a spacecraft into a player character?

Birth Of A Spacecraft PC

Science-fiction game systems vary greatly in their individual approaches to robotic characters and spacecraft, so you will have to explore the rules of your particular game carefully to get the needed gaming information. In general, there are two ways to go about creating a PC spacecraft:

1. Create the character as a computer or robot built into the ship itself. This works only if the game system provides a detailed and workable set of rules for creating and running robotic characters. As it happens, not many systems have such rules, and you often will be left to puzzle out vital questions such as: How many actions can a computer PC perform at once? What functions can the computer PC perform aboard the ship? What programs or skills can the computer know? NPC computers are easy for the DM to run, as they do whatever he wants them to do. This state of affairs obviously breaks down when players are brought into the picture.

2. Create the character as a cyborg, rolling up a regular spacecraft-pilot PC who becomes the ship's brain. You can assume that the pilot either met with an accident and became a cyborg thereafter, or (like Helva) became a cyborg as a result of a severe birth defect and was trained from youth in spacecraft piloting and operations.

In many ways, this option is easier than the computerized PC, but you'll still need some knowledge of computer operations on the ship. The cyborg can do as many things per round as a normal character can do, since he has the same patterns of thinking and paying attention. Not being all powerful, the cyborg might need the help of other PCs and NPCs to operate the spacecraft, unless various computer subsystems could be brought into play to help out (multiple robotic gunners, for instance).

If the pilot became a cyborg later in life, he might have some now-useless skills that required a physical body to perform (a spacecraft usually cannot shoot a pistol, for instance, unless it has robotic arms). The cyborg might have lots of mental and emotional problems adjusting to a bodiless life. For instance, what can the cyborg do about the opposite sex *now?*

But if the cyborg started while very young, all of his skills would be useful, as they would have been learned from the time of the cyborg's creation. The cyborg would know no other way of life and would regard being a spacecraft as perfectly normal, especially if other cyborg ships are known to exist.

No matter how a spacecraft PC is created, however, it is very important

that the spacecraft PC and the "regular" human and alien PCs aboard it be able to work together as a solid team. The ship-crew ("brain-brawn") partnership described in *The Ship Who Sang* is worth mentioning on this topic: A spacecraft should need its human crew as much as its crew needs the spacecraft; each should have abilities and skills to complement the other, covering for the disadvantages each possesses. Neither spacecraft nor crew should be all important; the survival of the team is what matters.

Other major considerations in creating the spacecraft PC follow.

Skills: The skills (or, more properly for computer PCs, programs) a spacecraft PC can have would be many and varied, but a few stand out as worthy of mention. The spacecraft ought to be able to pilot itself, perform navigation in space, communicate with other ships and with normal characters by several different means, monitor and test its own systems (such as engineering, fuel tankage, life support, and structural integrity), and use sensors to examine its surrounding environment. It might even have a sort of "internal security" system running, so it can check into every room and corridor within it to see what characters aboard are doing. This latter ability helps most in repelling hijackers and boarders, especially if combined with control over doorways and internal weapons systems. A spacecraft PC also should be able to handle itself in space combat using tactics and its own weaponry. Any technical knowledge required for its own maintenance would be useful, and a general store of knowledge, detailed or vague, may be provided in the ship's memory banks or computer library. (See the first installment of *The Living Galaxy* in issue #51 for ideas on controlling the "information explosion" in science-fiction campaigns using computer-data storage. A spacecraft PC should not be able to outthink everyone just because it never sleeps, and accessing a computerized library might be *very* time consuming.)

Other skills and powers may be granted to the spacecraft PC, as the game system (and the GM and players) allow. For example, the spacecraft could control its internal gravity, air quality, lighting, doors, temperature, and disaster-control systems (e.g., fire detection and prevention systems). It could have robotic units that obey its commands; small cleaning and maintenance robots come to mind. As long as no one in the group objects to giving the spacecraft PC more powers (and so long as it adds to the enjoyment of the game for everyone), do with it as you will.

Though most of a spacecraft's skills should be major, game-affecting ones (like piloting and library-knowledge skills), quirky little skills and programs are worth investigating if they contribute to the spacecraft's overall personality. Does the ship's computer have a gambling skill, for instance? If it is paranoid, does it insist on updating its internal-security systems and monitoring everyone on the ship? Use lots of imagination here!

Limits: The limitations on the powers and abilities of the spacecraft should be clearly and carefully set down. The players should write down as many questions as they can about the ship's capabilities: Can it fire its weapons if the crew is dead? Can it seal its airlock doors against intruders? Can it tell if it is running low on fuel? How does the ship communicate with other people or ships? What kind of "senses" will the ship have? Can someone with a piloting skill higher than the ship's be allowed to fly it? Brainstorm and find out all the questions that need to be answered *before* the campaign gets underway.

This also eliminates later complaints from players that the ship is overshadowing the other PCs. The PCs should be given skills that complement those the ship possesses, though some redundancy in skills can be helpful.

Size: How big should the spacecraft PC be? After looking over numerous game systems and their spacecraft, I've picked out what appear to be three ship sizes relevant for gaming purposes. The choice of which ship size is best must be made by everyone in the gaming group as well as the GM and the spacecraft's player, since it is assumed that all of the other PCs will be traveling aboard that ship.

Adventurer-class ships: These are small spacecraft each with crew sizes of about 10 or 12 at most, just big enough to comfortably contain a group of adventurers. The crew size is usually about equal to the number of players or PCs present, with a few NPCs to round out needed crew positions or to assist the PCs on their quests. An adventurer-class ship is the best sort of spacecraft PC, as its capabilities and limitations fit in well with those of the regular PCs. An adventurer-class ship should last a reasonably long time in a game campaign, but its loss is not a disaster for the campaign as a whole. You always can get another small spacecraft somewhere, whether or not the ship can think for itself.

Each adventure for this type of ship will also involve its entire crew. The chances of having part of the crew run off on a side adventure are low, as this would split the group and slow down play. All the players will tend to work together and become closely knits; "All for one, and one for all!" is the most appropriate motto. A spacecraft PC of this size is much more on an equal level with the other PCs than the larger ships that follow.

Campaign-class ships: These are large spacecraft with crew sizes of up to 100 people. The majority of the crew will be made up of NPCs who can, in a pinch, be used as PCs, depending on the adventure being run (creating the basic details for each NPC is not overly tedious, as there are not too many of them). Each player might be responsible for running a section of the ship (engineering, piloting, cargo handling, etc.) or just a few characters in each section. The GM could run the rest of the NPCs if no one else wanted to do so.

Each adventure will involve only a part of the ship's total crew, and there are many chances for side adventures and subplots to form. Because the campaign-class ship is so large and so many crewmen are present, these side adventures are less likely to mess up the campaign as a whole. The ship becomes the backdrop to the adventures, which makes its loss in a campaign far more disastrous than the loss of an adventurer-class ship. Big ships are hard to find.

A campaign-class ship PC faces the gaming problem of being extremely powerful. Here, the limits to the ship's powers are far more important. The ship is less able to get involved in some adventures than its smaller cousin. But it can still prove its worth if the campaign is primarily based around space travel or if the ship's player can be given specific mission goals separate from those of the other PCs, goals that still tie into the playing group's ultimate goals in the campaign (to get rich, to conquer an enemy, to explore space, etc.). In this case, the ship becomes the equal of the rest of the group combined, and goals should be carefully discussed and selected by the players and GM.

The ship's player will be challenged in his role-playing to be reasonably serious (as befits so powerful a character), yet appealing, too. With great power comes great responsibility; but it is also said that power corrupts. Arrogance, callousness, disrespect, or tyranny directed by the ship at the other PCs will not be warmly appreciated. The other players might also come to resent the power of the ship PC if it is hurled around too much, and the GM should take care to let neither the regular PCs nor the spacecraft become the focus for the campaign. Everyone should get an equal share of the spotlight.

Megacampaign-class ships: A ship of this size has up to 1,000 crewmen and usually has powers beyond belief (especially firepower). This type of ship really *is* the campaign background, and it would be ludicrous to have the ship threatened with destruction in every adventure (after all, it's everyone's home!). The megacampaign-class ship is mighty and, for gaming purposes, nearly eternal. And this produces lots of problems.

The majority of the crew are NPCs who lack both names and statistics; who could roll all of them up? And why bother? If you need a few people from the security division for an adventure, you could roll them up before the adventure starts. The players can either role-play a few select individuals among the ship's faceless crew (the bridge team is usually the choice) or can slowly rotate through a variety of characters from adventure to adventure. Only the ship PC would be the same.

Trying to personalize a PC ship this big is horribly difficult, but there are ways to do it. For example, the ship could have one or more man-sized robots, each directly controlled by the ship itself; these would be used as PCs to take part in adventures with regular characters (each robot would be something like the ship's "avatar," if you catch the idea here). If a robot is destroyed, another one can be purchased or created, with the ship's consciousness remaining undamaged from one avatar to another.

If power corrupts, then absolute power corrupts absolutely. A megacampaign-class ship PC is godlike compared to the other PCs, and the potential for power abuse is so great as to give any GM and player pause. The most important things to consider are the ships' limitations. The value of the regular PCs must be highly emphasized in this campaign to avoid having their players drop out due to jealousy or for lack of anything to do. Using the robotic avatar system noted earlier is one way to limit the ship's capabilities in certain adventures. If the other PCs are threatened, the spacecraft PC can come to their rescue with guns blazing, but a more subtle approach should be fostered in most adventures. Firepower and sheer size don't solve everything.

Personality: Whoever is allowed to role-play a spacecraft PC has a challenge ahead of him. Inside that ship's hull could be a calm, reserved, prim-and-proper lady; a poker-faced trickster full of bad puns and practical jokes; or a cheerful, bubbly airhead. A gung-ho warrior, a hysterical crybaby, a thrill-seeking adventurer, or a brooding tyrant could be lurking in the ship's computer or cyborg tank. However, any negative aspects of the ship's personality should be muted so the other players don't rebel at the way their characters are being treated in the game. The ship's personality will be magnified simply because the PC itself is so unusual; the player shouldn't make the ship too obnoxious (see the notes on the "Berserker Syndrome" that follow).

Some game systems provide hints on role-playing robotic characters, particularly the *Star Wars* and *Traveller* games (see the rules on Droids in the main rule

book, pages 82-84, for the former; see Book 8 *Robots,* pages 49-50, for the latter). Take these notes into account, but let the player develop his spacecraft character as fully as possible. Encourage character building with questions on the spacecraft's habits, loves, hatreds, emotional quirks, speech patterns, strong and weak points, hobbies, and goals. The spacecraft will certainly acquire a stronger personality as the game progresses and its history builds up, so not much needs to be put on paper at the game's start.

Short Circuits

As you can easily imagine, creating a spacecraft PC will mean facing lots of unique gaming problems. A few of these problems are noted below, with some ways to counter them.

1. The Fuzzy Wuzzy Syndrome: Incredibly, some SF games lack detailed rules on computers and spacecraft, making it nearly impossible to set up a spacecraft PC. Two solutions suggest themselves. First, feel free to borrow rules on robotic characters and spacecraft from other game systems, adapting them to the game you're using ("Steal the best, dump the rest"). Read as much as you can on how other game systems handle these areas even if your own game system seems fairly complete; you'll be amazed how many good ideas there are that you never thought of adding to your own campaign.

Second, resolve problems in running the spacecraft PC in advance; ask questions as noted earlier. How will space combat be conducted? How much library information can the ship access during the game? How many people will the life-support system care for at once? Flesh out the game mechanics clearly and early, with all players contributing, before the game comes to a grinding halt at a critical moment because you haven't figured out whether the spacecraft can fire its own ship-to-ship weapons without a gunner.

2. The Berserker Syndrome: A player who has not matured beyond the hack-and-slash level will undoubtedly love the idea of having a player character with the firepower and mobility of a spacecraft, even a small one. At the slightest provocation, the player may want to have his spacecraft burn down cities, raid the spaceways, and even (GM forbid) shoot other characters with the ship's lasers. A spacecraft PC is a ticket to disaster if it is run by someone with a "power problem."

The GM has several simple ways to control such activities. If the spacecraft's actions are screwing up the game campaign, the computer can suddenly shut down at the GM's whim. How? The computer has perhaps triggered a special subsystem (of which it was not aware) that was buried in its programming, a subsystem designed to stop "rogue computers" that threaten human welfare without reason. (I must point out that I generally object to having a GM "take over" any player's character in a game, but here it becomes obvious the campaign will collapse unless immediate action is taken.)

The computer's brain might be guided by the Laws of Robotics, as devised by Isaac Asimov in *I, Robot,* though these laws are fairly restrictive (the computer will not be able to harm any human being, for instance). If the computer disobeys a direct order, a self-destruct mechanism might go into effect, cutting the computer's power source, or humans might override the computer by using special commands or control panels. (I dislike having other players "take over" another player's character even more than I dislike having the GM do it, but this remains an option in radical situations. If players can too easily harm the spacecraft PC by reprogramming or damaging its computer or cyborg tank, the spacecraft player will be very ticked off!)

If the player loses his spacecraft PC to the GM because of unwanted behavior, the computer should not be reactivated as a PC until someone else runs the computer character (in game terms, it must be taken to a computer-repair shop for reprogramming to remove its "insanity," and it will gain a brand-new personality as a result). If no one else is available to run the computer PC, the GM can run it as an NPC or can give it no personality at all. The player who lost the spacecraft PC can roll up a human or alien character thereafter.

The threat of shutting down a computer-spacecraft PC due to its hidden internal programs should not be used often, if at all, or it will discourage a certain amount of creativity and enjoyment on the part of the spacecraft's player. This option should be a last resort, used only if the player is disrupting the game. The best way to avoid the Berserker Syndrome is to make sure the person running the spacecraft PC respects both game balance and the other PCs. It might be fine with everyone to have the player make his spacecraft blast away at attackers or bomb hostile military bases from space; it all depends on the needs of the campaign and on the players and GM.

Of course, it might be interesting for the computer PC to discover it has some unusual "buried" programs that make it do odd or undesirable things once in a while. Can the computer find someone who can remove or correct the odd programming? And why would anyone put such commands in the computer in the first place? This could lead to some interesting adventures for the group.

3. The Colossus Syndrome: Even if you don't have a killer spacecraft PC loose in the universe, you might still have a problem if you grant the PC too much power with few restrictions. This gets to be a big mess, especially if the computer is assumed to have a huge memory store, and if the player wants his PC to be omnipotent, able to outthink all opponents and other PCs.

This problem can be prevented in part by using a cyborg system for controlling the ship. Underneath all that metal and wiring, the ship is just a regular person like you and me, and the range of skills and knowledge the ship has would be like anyone else's. Using an adventurer-class ship also solves much of this problem. Why use a megacampaign-class ship when a little one will do just fine?

The following two columns will focus on specific games in which you can role-play spacecraft and on the types of adventures in which a spacecraft and its crew can be involved, as well as other useful advice. Because this topic is a new one for role-playing games (as far as I can tell), your comments and ideas would be wonderful. Please write to: The Living Galaxy, POLYHEDRON™ Newszine, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

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Bookwyrms

A Force For Good In The Realms

by Marlys Heeszel

Malevolent rulers, evil wizards, priests, warriors, and rogues move about freely in shadowed areas of the Forgotten Realms. Greed for power and riches feeds on itself as different factions plot for control. Assassination, slavery, and betrayal are commonplace. The Zhentarim, a Black Network of evil individuals, are in constant action, moving against all who would oppose them, even their own. And from across the Sea of Fallen Stars, the Red Wizards of Thay, an extremely large and powerful conclave of evil wizards, seek to dominate their land, as well as their neighbors'.

Behind the scenes, members of a secret and ancient society stand fast against this chaos. They move quietly, often individually or in small groups, spying on those who would bring death and destruction to the peaceful peoples and countries of the Realms. These are the Harpers, a group whose greatest strength lies not in armies, but in the talents of its individual members. Several hundred winters earlier, the Harpers were formed to promote good. At one time they consisted primarily of bards, druids, and rangers. Now they are the closest thing to a good-aligned band of rogues that there is in the Heartlands—and are, perhaps, its only hope for a truly peaceful future.

This is the background of the new Harpers series from TSR that will premiere this summer. Although each novel will not be linked by plot to others in the series, each story will focus on the secret organization known as the Harpers, dedicated to preserving and restoring good in the Forgotten Realms. Joining the Harpers is relatively easy, although living up to their code of conduct is not. To first become a Harper, one has to be sponsored by a long-term member in good standing. The neophyte is then assigned a series of tasks that will not only forward the Harper cause, but will also test the mettle of the new recruit. When accepted, the new Harper is given a pin decorated with a silver moon and harp, the symbol of the order. However, as the novice Harper will learn, acceptance is only the beginning. Adventure and danger await.

Our series begins with *The Parched Sea*, which will be available in July. Written by Troy Denning, whose first novel, *Waterdeep*, was a *New York Times* bestseller, *The Parched Sea* begins when the Zhentarim, who are determined to drive a trade route through Anauroch, sending an army to enslave the fierce nomads of the Great Desert. Only a single person, the outcast witch Ruha, sees the true danger. But the sheikhs won't believe the words of a woman, let alone heed the advice of one who is a witch. When the Harpers send an agent to impede the Zhentarim plan of conquest, Ruha realizes the agent may be their only salvation. It is up to her to help the stranger win the trust of the sheikhs, in the hope that he can overcome the Bedine's fierce, lifetime rivalries and help them drive the invaders from the desert.

Denning, who also wrote the second novel of the Empires Trilogy, *Dragonwall*, has much literary experience in dealing with the less-familiar cultures in the Realms. *The Parched Sea* takes us to a land where not only the threat of the Zhentarim must be considered, but also the constant challenge of survival in a land that at best only tolerates its human occupants—a place inhabited by ghosts, night-stalking lizardmen, and other dangerous magical creatures.

When asked why he wanted to write about the Harpers, Denning replied, "The Harpers interest me for two reasons. First, everybody wants to think that, ultimately, there is someone out there who is striving for justice and working to make the world a fair place, the way the Harpers do in the Realms. Second, I've always had an interest in espionage-type societies and thought it would be fun to explore an organization like that in a fantasy context."

Elfshadow by Elaine Cunningham is the second Harper novel for 1991 and will be available in October. As *Elfshadow* opens, Harpers are being murdered. The trail of deaths seems to lead to a half-elven adventurer, Arilyn Moonblade. It is true that Arilyn once had been an assassin, although not in the usual sense. Arilyn was an honorable assassin who challenged the evil and wicked denizens of the Realms to single combat. To the young half-elf, whose father was a paladin, honor is paramount, and now her honor is being challenged. Working as a Harper agent, and armed with a magical sword that cannot shed innocent blood, Arilyn finds herself tormented by strange dreams and stalked by shadows. She must uncover the ancient secret of her sword's power in order to find and face the real Harper assassin. And she must do it before she is either found guilty of the crimes herself or becomes the next victim.

Author Cunningham liked the fact that little is known about the Harpers, because it gave her a chance to add to the lore of the Forgotten Realms. She feels that the mysterious, little-known Harpers are good without being "goody-goody." She intends her story to give a little bit of the history of the Harpers, as well as some background on how one joins the group. As well as maintaining the natural balance and involving themselves in political intrigue, the Harpers are also a nosy bunch, and, as it turns out, it is fortunate they are. As Cunningham warns us, "If Arilyn cannot prove her innocence, the outcome of the murder investigation in *Elfshadow* could permanently upset the balance between the elves and the other races."

The third book in The Harpers series for 1991 is *Red Magic*, which will premiere in December. Written by Jean Rabe, who is well-known to you as coordinator for the RPGA™ Network and editor of this newszine, *Red Magic* takes us across the Sea of Fallen Stars to Thay, the most wicked land in the Realms, where the feared Red Wizards rule. One of the most powerful Red Wizards wants to control more than his share of the country. Together, three Harpers—a druid, a centaur, and a magic-wielding young woman—form a small band of heroes who pose as slaves and slavers to infiltrate the malevolent land.

The Red Wizards are known for their treachery, not only to outsiders, but also to each other. They tend to be impulsive, insulting, high-handed, and deadly. The three Harpers must not

Continued on page 30

The Everwinking Eye

Who's Who in Mulmaster

by Ed Greenwood

"What is worse than a city of thieves? Why, a city of merchants."

Bhelorn Shavarr,
One Warrior's Way
Year of the Grotto

We rode into Mulmaster last time for a look around, and found it not very welcoming. Let's keep looking—carefully!

The Soldiers of Mulmaster

Mulmaster's military strength has been increasing to keep pace with its wealth, despite the setbacks in battle against Zhentil Keep. Mulmaster's soldiers are recruited from city residents and from the overcrowded cities of the Vilhon Reach. They are well-trained, well paid, and well-equipped. Their loyalties are carefully examined by the thought-probing magics of Mulmaster's "Cloaks" (Guild of wizards), and the soldiers never grow lax or bored with their duties.

The soldiers are rotated through many tasks: they serve in Mulmaster's war-fleet, land patrols, and "Sally Force"; perform diplomatic bodyguard duty for outsiders visiting Mulmaster; and guard important merchants and nobles of the city who venture elsewhere in the Realms. The military also polices Mulmaster's streets, sewers, and docks. All soldiers receive instruction in one of Mulmaster's often-moved training camps in the mountains nearby; these camps are notorious for punishing drills and for ample—and often tawdry—off-duty entertainments.

Mulmaster has about 6,000 men-at-arms (not including hostlers, quartermasters, messengers, and sailors whose primary role is not to fight). Ten percent of the force consists of fighters fourth level or higher, with 10 percent of this "elite" being 8th level and above. Ranks in the military are only loosely tied to experience level; from lowest to highest, they are as follows: bladesman, quicksword (ten bladesmen are led by a quicksword), captain (six quickswords report to a captain), strikewhip (all battle messengers, aides-de-camp, and bodyguards to higher ranks are of this rank), battlemaster (general), and the noble Blades and High Blade. The temporarily-appointed leader of a field unit, armed encampment, or area of operations (roughly equivalent to an "Officer of the Day") is known as the Champion of the Charge.

Currently there are eight full battlemasters in the ranks. (Battlemasters in training are known as battlelances. They rank between strikewhip and battlemasters, but are held apart from the chain of command unless all battlemasters are slain.) One battlemaster, Thiondred Calambar, is past fighting age and is in charge of Mulmaster's training and recruitment agents, the Hawks. The Hawks are an autonomous group whose members all share the rank of strikewhip; their experience levels and character classes are varied.

The remaining generals are listed below in rough order of influence (abbreviations are the same as those used in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS™ Adventures* hardback, see page 69 of that book for a list):

* **Kuirth "Mulhammer" Baeruim,** NE hm F13, Watchmaster of the City (oversees policing and security within Mulmaster).
* **Thiondred Calamabar,** LN hm F16, Hawkmaster (oversees training and recruitment).
* **Maergar Blackserpent,** CE hm F16 oversees land patrols and guard posts around Mulmaster and agents gathering information in other cities).
* **Dulhoun Crestsilver,** NE hm F14 (commands Mulmaster's naval forces on the Moonsea).
* **Sakarra Shindol,** NE hf F14 (oversees trade escorts and bodyguards, land and sea).
* **Juldar "the Bald" Thomm,** CE hm F13 (second to Maergar).
* **Tzsorbar Thoul,** NE hm F12 (second to Dulhoun).
* **Jallaha Deirmar,** NE hf F12 (second to Thiondred).

The Cloaks

All known wizards (including illusionists) of fourth level or more must join the Cloaks if they wish to remain in the city for longer than six consecutive nights, and more than a cumulative total of thirty nights in a season. Joining is a long and difficult process involving much magical investigation and testing of the applicant's inner thoughts and intentions. All non-Cloak mages are forbidden to practice even the smallest active magic while within the city walls. Active magic includes spells, cantrips, and items that produce spell-like effects. Defensive items such as *rings of protection* are not prohibited. Any transgression of this rule results in immediate arrest by a dozen soldiers reinforced by six or more powerful Cloaks. Seizure and confiscation of all spellbooks and magical items, and expulsion from the city invariably follows. However, expulsion occurs only after thorough questioning (with magical aid) about the prisoner's deeds and intentions. If the interrogation uncovers anything actively hostile to Mulmaster or its ruling nobles, the prisoner is put to death.

The Cloaks are strictly ranked according to magical ability (experience level). They are issued magic items, but may own them only with the permission of the Council, which seldom allows such items to be retained for long save by extremely dedicated and loyal Cloaks.

The Council consists of all Cloaks of 12th level and above (currently 29 people), and is led by the Senior Cloak, Thurndan Tallwand—a white-bearded, distinguished, and wantonly cruel Chaotic Evil human male 17th level wizard—and by the High Blade. Two other Blades sit on the Council, and all four of these top-ranking Councilors hold veto power over the Council's doings and decrees, with the High Blade's authority being absolute.

The Cloaks possess a wide variety of items, many of them seized from visiting adventurers. They specialize in pinpoint offensive spells and items (such as *wands of magic missiles*) and in surveillance magic, as befits their role as secret police. Cloaks are constantly monitoring the thoughts of those around them, and thereby effectively police the loyalty of their peers and the city's soldiers. Diligent Cloaks who distinguish themselves are rewarded with free training to further their abilities, the permission to use (and learn the secrets of) increasingly powerful

magic, and holidays in the luxurious underground Palace of Revels beneath the High Blade's Tower. Wizards who leave the Brotherhood of the Cloak are deemed dangerously-well-informed traitors, and are hunted down—even to the far corners of the Realms—and slain.

Nobility And Titles

The nobles of Mulmaster are a set number of Lords—49—and their families, plus the "Archpriests" of the temples of certain deities, the ruling Blades (currently 16 of these) and their families, and the ruling High Blade and his family. Family members, who are not lords themselves, are given the title-of-honor "Zor" (if male) or "Zora" (if female). A female Lord is called a "Lord" in Mulmaster, not "Lady." The status of honor-titled nobles depends upon the titled noble of the family—if that high person is slain or cast down, the family members can lose their nobility overnight.

Wealth, lineage, and long residency in Mulmaster are certainly factors in becoming noble, but nobility is conferred by free, secret vote of all the Lords, Archpriests, and Blades (the High Blade may vote only to break a tie). All of these may also nominate candidates. In practice, however, Lords find an Archpriest or Blade of like mind to make the actual nomination. The Blades and High Blade have no veto over such elections.

A noble may become a Blade only by majority vote of the Blades (over which the High Blade has a veto). A majority vote of the Blades is also needed to "cast down" a Blade to the ranks of the nobility (sometimes temporarily swelling the ranks of Lords beyond 49), or exile the Lord utterly, or put him to death. An identical process is used to strip a Lord of title.

The High Blade who wished to eliminate rivals or break up a cabal of opponents without all this voting, lobbying, and debate can simply ask to have them slain by stealth. Care must be taken, however, not to overuse or flaunt this means of solving one's troubles. If Lords or Blades ever become so worried about their own skins that the need for self preservation overcomes their fears of retribution (the High Blade has informers everywhere and failed coups are common) they will unite to slay a High Blade who threatens them all. Thulsanna's predecessor, Deimos Mattercloak, who was known as "Bloodtongue" for the numerous times he ordered assassinations, was the victim of a successful coup.

Current Blades of Mulmaster include:

* **Ghondiir Helsavvin,** CN hm W11, and member of the Council of the Cloaks.
* **Ontthala Hulzammer,** NE hf F6, one of the richest Mulmasterites currently living, through her inherited ownership of a merchant fleet of more than 80 ships. She is widely believed to be Selfaril's lover.
* **Jhantalassa Imbritter,** NE hf F15.
* **Ulgor Jalth,** CE hm F11.
* **Thuilander Khaumair,** LN hm F9.
* **Buldaeran Maircambair,** LN hm F16.
* **Prusthip Melltrit,** NE hm F17, a young and careful rival to Selfaril who is patiently building his own forces and allies for an eventual challenge.
* **Kormarth Ulsant,** a NE, hm F11.
* **Delphinthar Zaltrim,** LE hm W19 level, member of the Council of Cloaks.

Particulars of other Blades are left to individual DMs.

The special powers and privileges of a noble include the title and a city-provided guard-of-honor around the noble's residence and around the noble's person. The guard consists of one Cloak and eight bladesmen clad in full plate armor—which is known as "coat-of-plate" in the northern Realms. Nobles have the right to hire and have personal bodyguards of up to 16 men-at-arms within the city walls, and to use a distinctive personal coat-of-arms, which the noble's family may wear and display. The noble's servants may wear a simplified version, and personal bodyguards are required to wear their employer's coat-of-arms when bearing weapons within the city walls. Nobles also are allowed to bring business before the Blades, who must meet at least once in the waxing of each moon (about once a month).

Blades are allowed all the privileges of nobles, a honor guard of 19 soldiers and two Cloaks, the freedom to hire 35 bodyguards (often powerful adventurers in Sembia, Hillsfar, Tsurlagol, and Calaunt), and an annual salary of 10,000 pieces of gold, paid from the city treasury. (The High Blade gets 90,000 gp annually.)

Blades and their families also have luxurious, gigantic quarters in the sprawling Towers of the Blade; these are interconnected by bridges and tunnels. Blades also can maintain other residences in the city if they wish. The Towers of the Blade are serviced by a private (covered) canal and docks, which is guarded by a fortress-arch where the canal leaves the harbor.

Blades can refuse all challenges from those of lesser rank (and all non-Mulmasterites, regardless of rank) without losing honor. Indeed, challenging a Blade is considered an insult to the city, whether the challenger knows the customs or that his foe is a Blade.

That's all we can squeeze in about Mulmaster this time, before leaving you with some news.

Current Clack

* Faerladeeyn, one of the most powerful of the satraps who rule the lands east of Ithal Pass (some call these sovereigns The Elder Caliyms), has issued a public warning to Manshoon of Zhentil Keep, who dwells in the Moonsea lands far to the north. Faerladeeyn has declared that his Silk Blades are now at war with Manshoon's Zhentarim. Any agents or known allies of the Dark Network found anywhere in the lands about The Shining Sea will be slain on sight—if they are lucky.

Faerladeeyn is a noted adventurer, now publicly retired. A warrior of skill, he once stood alone against 14 blades in a tavern in Tashluta, and emerged alive, defeating all of them. He is known to have amassed an impressive collection of magical swords.

The Elder Caliyms consider themselves the true power and spirit of The Lands of the Lions. They sneer at the proud but hollow, boastful upstarts of Calimport and at the present Calishite merchants, who swagger and squander riches in a land where money talks and honor is silent. Both groups, say the Elder Caliyms, are growing increasingly soft and blind to the world as it really is.

It is not known what reply Manshoon has made to Faerladeeyn's announcement, or even if he reacted to the news.

*Citizens of Zhentil Keep have reported seeing dead beholders rotting in alleys near the city walls, and finding small pieces of certain mages and priests of Bane carefully arranged down the center of a street one morning. The Zhentarim seem to be undergoing a period of internal difficulties again. ❑

The Living City

The Dancing Bear Inn

by Terrence and Eric Kemper

The Dancing Bear, a boisterous inn and entertainment spot, is located in a sturdy stone building in the tent town beyond the Ravens Bluff gate. It is not far from the Two Brothers Butchery inside the city proper. The establishment took its name from an early dancing bear act, and it continues to offer unusual kinds of amusements.

There is a large pit at one end of the tavern; this is used for fights between animals or small monsters, human wrestling matches, and the like. Human armed contests and grudge matches are forbidden by law but have been known to occur in the late night hours. Most patrons wager heavily on these events, and the gambling usually generates more excitement than the contests.

The bear pit or arena is an elongated octagon, roughly 20 by 30 feet. The pit is about eight feet deep, and a wooden palisade reaches another four feet above this. Animals and monsters are herded into an adjacent underground holding cage prior to performances. At show time, a metal-reinforced animal gate in the pit's wall opens and the contestants are driven through a chute and into the arena.

On the ground floor, there are three rows of bleachers immediately above the palisade. Behind the third row of bleachers is the main floor of the tavern, where there are benches and tables for eating and drinking. Across the far end of the tavern is the bar; the kitchen is behind it.

The ceiling has a large opening over the arena which goes all the way to a skylight in the roof. This illuminates the pit during the afternoon and early evening when most of the matches are held. Rufus Railsplitter, the owner, learned night performances and torches do not mix well with drunken, riotous patrons. The first tavern he owned that rested on this spot burned to the ground during such a riot.

The inn's second floor contains galleries which overlook the pit. This enables the upper classes to watch the savage games without mingling with the rougher classes below. The galleries can be rented separately for a reasonable price. The second floor also contains sleeping and living quarters for the proprietor, his wife, Alba, their two young sons, Eric and Victor, and various employees.

A wooden building several yards behind the kitchen has stables for patron's mounts on the ground floor and rooms for rent on the upper floor.

The Dancing Bear has a mixed clientele consisting of low-lifes and gamblers and some of the higher class men who like the rough sports; the gentry rent the galleries to entertain their friends and rakish acquaintances. Money flows like water during the wagering on games and pickpockets are common despite efforts to keep them out. The tavern is also an ideal place for spies and criminals.

Rufus has several employees, among them his own pickpocket, Hans Lightfoot (Rufus has nothing against pickpockets if he gets part of the take), two bouncers, Roman Roughhand and Jason Jost, and three serving wenches, Clara Loudcry, Eva Evers, and Maxie Moorehouse. Rufus employs a money changer, Clinton Clinker, and takes a percentage from the coin Clinton handles. There are two combination animal-handlers and stable hands, Bart the Boar and Danton Dogman. The cook is a tough-talking older woman named Gretchen Godbold.

Prices are fair at the Dancing Bear Inn, considering that the food is excellent and the rooms are clean. Rufus rents out galleries or the entire tavern for banquets. Rufus is picky about what he serves, and buys only the best game from local hunters. Rufus gets a steady supply of fine meats from the Two Brothers' Butchery (see issue #59), which he also owns.

Bill of Fare

Item	Price
Ale, beer, mead	
Mug	3 cp
Jug	15 cp
Wine, local	
Glass	1 sp
Bottle	3 sp
Wine, imported	
Glass	3 sp
Bottle	1 gp
Meal	3 sp
(Includes meat, vegetables, and bread.)	
Extra bread	5 cp
Cheese	
wedge	5 cp
Round (8 wedges)	4 sp
Venison	2 sp
Bear	3 sp
Beef	2 sp
Mutton	1 sp
Fish, fresh	1 sp
Soup	
Bowl	5 cp
Cup	2 cp
Egg, fresh	2 cp

Lodging/Services

Banquets	10 gp/person (min.)
Bed (per person)	4 sp/night; 3 gp/week
Rooms (4 beds)	16 sp/night; 10 gp/week
Tavern bench	1 sp/night
Baths	1 sp
Extra buckets of hot water	2 sp
Stable & fodder for mounts	5 sp/day
Storage room & lock	1 gp/day
Gallery rental	5 gp/night

Rufus Railsplitter

6th Level Male Human Fighter

STR: 13
INT: 15
WIS: 12
DEX: 10
CON: 10
CHR: 17
AC Normal: 5
AC Rear: 5
Hit Points: 35
Alignment: Chaotic Neutral
Languages: Common, Halfling, Elvish

Weapon Proficiencies: Battle axe (specialist), spear, dagger, club
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Bargaining (17), gaming (17), local history (17), riding (land-based) (15)

Appearance: Rufus Railsplitter is a vigorous 39-year-old with broad, power-

ful shoulders. He is 5'10" tall, weighs 190 pounds, has short black hair peppered with gray, and a well-trimmed gray beard.

Background: Rufus is a skilled bargainer, which helps him buy the Dancing Bear's provisions cheaply and set prices for maximum profit. He never gambles. Once, when unable to pay a gambling debt, his "creditor" cut off his left hand at the wrist, and he now wears a leather guard with a broad, flat metal blade on the end. Rufus has a hidden stiletto which can shoot out the front of his arm guard in an emergency. (Speed factor 2, Size S, type P, damage S-M 1d3/L 1d2, rate of fire 1, range 1/2/4.) The loss of his hand ended Rufus' days of adventuring, and he opened an inn. He soon met his wife, Alba, who is the great love of his life. Outwardly, Rufus lives the life of a middle-class tavern owner, but he has built a small fortune and owns a butcher shop, a bakery, and has plans to acquire more businesses in town. According to rumors, he has a cache of money hidden away.

Rufus is a jovial, friendly man, who is good in a fight. Common sense is one of his strongest traits. He does have a darker side, however; he employs a pickpocket, Hans Lightfoot, and deals in underworld information. But he never commits crimes himself.

Rufus' two sons, Eric, 10, and Victor, 5, are too young to be much help around the Inn, and their mother is overprotective of them. Rufus always hoped for a daughter, the image of his beloved wife, and thinks he might get his wish. He knows Alba has been gaining weight and is sometimes ill in the morning.

Alba Railsplitter

5th Level Half-Elf Female Bard

STR: 13
INT: 15
WIS: 9
DEX: 14
CON: 10
CHR: 17
AC Normal: 6
AC Rear: 6
Hit Points: 23
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Gnomish

Weapon Proficiencies: Hand axe, dagger, staff
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Musical instruments (harp, flute, and fiddle) (17), singing (17), dancing (14), cooking (15), herbalism (13)
Spells/Day: 3 1

Bard Abilities

CW	DN	PP	RL
70	40	40	25

Spell Books

Level 1 Spells:

Cantrip
Charm Person
Change Self
Affect Normal Fires
Ventriloquism

Level 2 Spells

Deeppockets
Blindness
Glitterdust

Appearance: Alba has an extraordinary voice and sings often. Being a 60-year-old half-elf, she is small and delicate, 5' tall and 95 pounds (However, she has gained about eight pounds recently.) She wears her silvery-blond hair in curls piled on top of her head and decorated with ribbons that nearly match her pale blue eyes.

Background: Alba and Rufus met years ago when she played at his first inn. It was not love at first sight, however, but a mutual growing admiration. Through the years she learned to love him. She suspects she is pregnant with their third child, but she wants to be sure before telling Rufus, since he wants a daughter so badly. Alba spoils the boys rotten, but she knows that soon they will begin to show an acute interest in the goings on at the Dancing Bear, and will need some toughening up.

Although the Inn has a regular cook, subtle flavorings from Alba's herb garden are what make the Inn's cooking famous throughout the region.

Alba is kind-hearted and has been known to sweet-talk the sterner Rufus into hiding young adventurers in trouble with the law in the "secret" room in the attic.

Hans Lightfoot

4th Level Human Male Thief

STR: 12
INT: 10
WIS: 13
DEX: 17
CON: 16
CHR: 14
AC Normal: 4
AC Rear: 7
Hit Points: 26
Alignment: Chaotic Neutral
Languages: Common, Halfling, Thieves Cant

Weapon Proficiencies: Short sword, dagger, light crossbow
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Local history (14), disguise (14), gaming (14), riding (land-based) (16), ventriloquism (8), leatherworking (10)

Appearance: Hans is slender and quick on his feet. He is 23 years old, 5'9" tall, and weighs 135 pounds. He wears his dark brown hair very short so he can easily put disguises over it.

Background: Rufus and Hans split the pickpocketing "take" 50/50. Hans also gives Rufus inside information from the underworld through his connections with the local thieves guild. Rufus generally sells this information to the highest bidder, and rarely supplies it to the city watch. Rufus prefers to deal with adventurers and other private individuals.

Hans has been on one adventure outside the city, and it took him only 150 miles from home. He may be inclined to join another adventure if he thinks it will be profitable.

Roman Roughhand

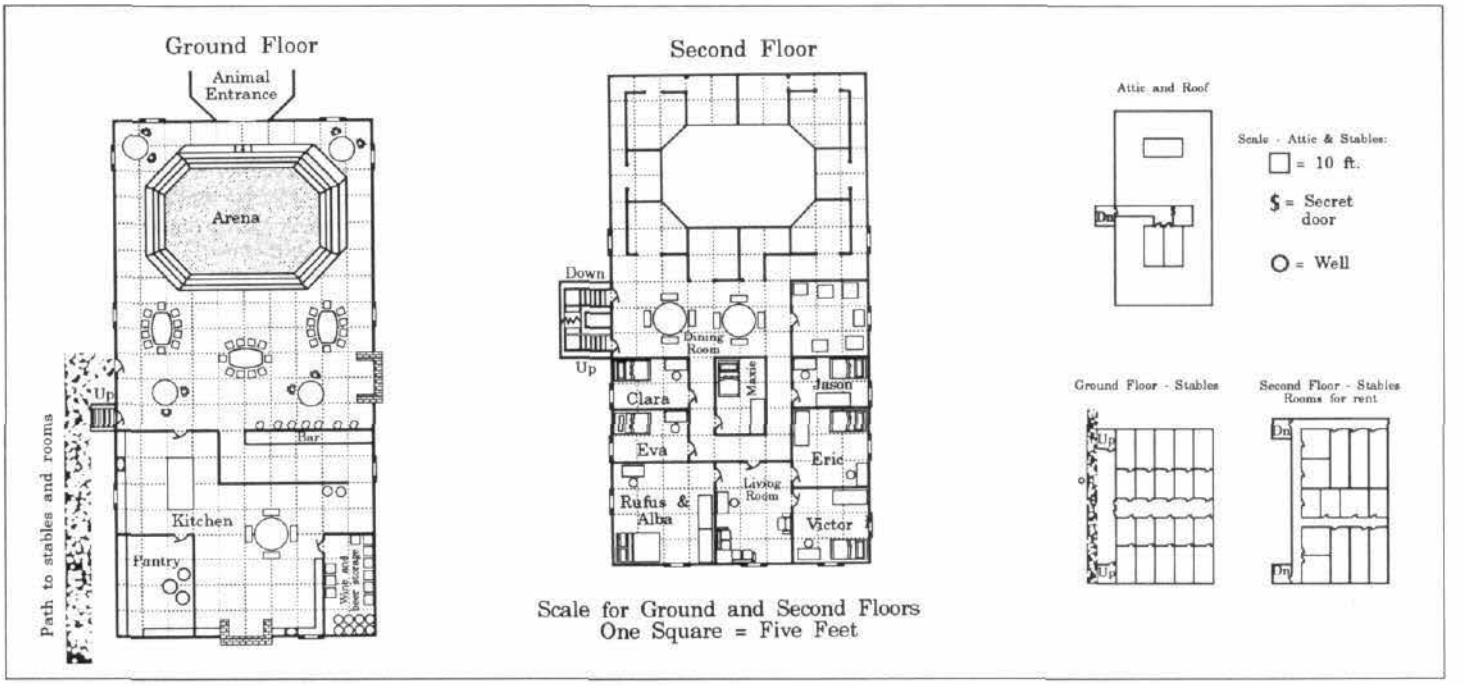
5th Level Human Male Fighter

STR: 18/23
INT: 9
WIS: 14
DEX: 8
CON: 17
CHA: 6
AC Normal: 3
AC Rear: 3
Hit Points: 40
Alignment: Lawful Neutral
Languages: Common, Elvish

Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword (specialist), long bow, spear, whip
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Hunting (13), trapping (9), dog handling (13), animal lore (9)

Appearance: Roman is 6'5" tall and weighs 250 pounds. He has dark red hair and an equally dark, bushy beard. Although he is 46 years old, he looks almost twenty years younger due to a longevity potion he took on an adventure four years ago.

Background: Formerly an adventuring



fighter, Roman has settled down and wants to find a good wife. Most of the young women at the inn, however, are not the type he wants.

His favorite hobby is hunting, which he pursues in the early morning with his dogs and long bow and arrows. He stalks large birds and deer, which he sells to Rufus for food at the Inn. Rufus seems to be at his best in the outdoors, where he is calm and easy to get along with. In town he appears gruff and tough, overpowering his foes by sheer strength. He used to wrestle in the arena, but got tired of fixed fights. Many people at the inn respect him, but few like him. Newcomers actually fear Roman after they have seen him "bounce" a couple of times.

Jason Jost

1st Level Human Male Fighter

STR: 18/56
INT: 10
WIS: 15
DEX: 13
CON: 17
CHA: 7
AC Normal: 5
AC Rear: 5
Hit Points: 10
Alignment: Lawful Neutral
Languages: Common

Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword, mace, dagger, short bow
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Fishing (14), running (11), jumping (18)

Appearance: Jason Jost is the youngest of the two bouncers at 19 years old. He is big and blond, 6'1" tall and 170 pounds, yet he is quick and surprisingly powerful. Patrons have little difficulty distinguishing him from the swarthy Roman.

Background: When Jason was six years old, the kindhearted Alba "rescued" him from an orphanage; he considers her like a mother. Rufus, was at first annoyed with his unwanted "adopted" son. However, he has come to like the boy, who works hard, tells good stories, and stops fights at the inn with his quick wittedness.

Jason went on a short adventure a year ago and is itching to go out on his own. However, he thinks he should wait a year or two until he "fills out" some more. Besides, Jason finds life at the inn pretty exciting sometimes, and he is in no hurry to leave Alba, who treats him well.

Clara Loudcry

1st Level Dwarven Female Cleric

STR: 10
INT: 13
WIS: 14
DEX: 10
CON: 11
CHA: 14
AC Normal: 10
Hit Points: 8
Alignment: Chaotic Good
Languages: Dwarven, Common
Spells/Day: 3 (from the spheres of Combat, Healing, and Protection)

Weapon Proficiencies: Sling, mace
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Singing (14), healing (12), sewing (10), swimming (10)

Appearance: Clara Loudcry is 35, 4'6" tall, and weighs 130 pounds. She has blond hair with dark streaks. She relishes her job as a serving wench at the Dancing Bear, and she spends most of her nights energetically serving and greeting patrons.

Background: Clara is a former initiate to the temple of Moradin. However, she quickly decided religious life was not for her, and left to wander from job to job in Ravens Bluff's business districts. Hence, she is limited in her clerical ability and cannot turn undead. She found work at the Dancing Bear two years ago, and has no desire to go elsewhere for employment. At the Inn she sings drinking and bawdy songs in a loud, gravely voice. Her singing is not nearly so splendid as Alba's, but it is good enough to get everyone singing along and stamping their feet in time to the beat. ❑

Into The Dark

Vampire Hunters And Graboids

by James Lowder

Because I write these columns so far in advance (it's early January as I pen this), I've yet to see any response to my comments last issue about the paucity of good sword & sorcery films on video. Jean and Skip have made their opinions on the matter known; one of the films they recommend will come under the spotlight in the next few months if I can locate it. I'm interested in hearing what you think on the subject of fantasy films, too, so drop me a line c/o the POLYHEDRON™ Newszine.

This time we have a wide spectrum of film genres, from Gothic horror to 50s radiation-paranoia science fiction. The films are rated as follows:

You can't get any better	*****
Entertaining and enjoyable	****
There are worse films	***
Wait for cable	**
A waste of good tape	*

CAPTAIN KRONOS: VAMPIRE HUNTER

1974, 91 Minutes
Hammer/Paramount
Director: Brian Clemens
Starring: Horst Janson, John Carson, John Cater, Caroline Munro

****1/2**

The same year Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* shocked horror film goers, a year after *The Exorcist* brought people in flocks to see a possessed Linda Blair spit pea soup, the dying Hammer film studios in England released *Captain Kronos*. The film, an amalgamation of the better aspects of Gothic horror films, Westerns, and mysteries was a hopeful entry, intended to grow into a series that would replace Hammer's sputtering Christopher Lee/Dracula cycle.

Kronos (Horst Janson), a former captain of "the imperial guard," is a veteran of some vague early 19th Century war in a rather typical Gothic European country. While Kronos was away fighting, vampires got hold of his mother and sister; when the good captain returned home, his former loved ones attacked him. He still carries the scars to prove it. In response, Kronos dedicated his life to hunting down vampires wherever they might hide.

Aided by the hunchbacked Professor Hieronymus Grost (John Cater), who provides the brains to Kronos's brawn, and beautiful Hammer veteran Caroline Munro, who provides . . . er, emotional support, Kronos answers the call of an old friend, a former army surgeon. The surgeon (John Carson) reveals that his village is being preyed upon by a vampire who drains youth, not blood, from its victims. It's up to Kronos to discover the vampire's identity and deal with the menace before the town runs out of young girls.

The premise is intriguing, but in the skillful hands of writer/director Brian Clemens, one of the driving forces behind the excellent *Avengers* television series, *Captain Kronos* became a near-perfect cross-genre excursion. The script is witty, the action swift and well-paced, and the swordplay expertly choreographed by a Royal Shakespeare Company veteran. Clemens deftly borrowed from classic Westerns like *Shane* for a barroom duel between Kronos—who wields a saber and a samurai sword—and three thugs. He also makes the identity of the vampire a compelling mystery, a rare plot twist at the time.

The film's strengths are evident from the start, and many would-be classic scenes abound. My favorite is the sequence where Kronos and Grost have captured an unwilling minion of the main villain. Destroying the creature is not as easy as driving a stake through its heart, however. No, in Kronos's world there are "as many species of vampire as there are beasts of prey," each with its own unique weakness. The heroes must experiment with two or three methods before they find the right one to put this particular vampire to rest.

The film was not a hit for Hammer when it was released, paired as it was with the rather pathetic *Frankenstein and the Monster From Hell.* The main reason for this tepid reception might have been the actor chosen to play the title character. As Kronos, Horst Janson is stiff and even unlikable. The rest of the cast—especially John Carson and John Cater—often steal the spotlight from Janson. Alas, Kronos never got the chance to prove himself a more popular hero; the other films planned for the series were never made.

BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS

1980, 104 Minutes
New World/Vestron
Director: Jimmy Murakami
Starring: Richard Thomas, Robert Vaughn, John Saxon, George Peppard

*1/2

Some film fans and many critics really like this dog. I can't understand why.

Richard Thomas (John Boy from *The Waltons*) is a wimpy young man named Shad from the peaceful planet, Akir. When Sador (John Saxon) threatens to wipe out the world if the residents don't surrender to him, Shad goes off with a sentient ship in search of mercenaries. He gathers six other ships to fight alongside him. Together, Shad and his allies change the peaceful world into an armed camp and prepare to fight nasty John Saxon and his fleet.

The weak tongue-in-cheek plot is self-consciously derived from a far superior Western, *The Magnificent Seven*, which was itself derived from the Japanese epic, *The Seven Samurai.* The script (by John Sayles of *Eight Men Out* fame) and the casting contain various allusions to these films, from the relatively subtle naming of the planet after the director of *The Seven Samurai,* Akira Kurosawa, to Robert Vaughn's presence in the cast. Vaughn plays a cold-hearted killer in both this film and the Western upon which it's based, but he had a far superior part in the original. In *Battle,* he is tough and hunted, but possesses little of the humanity afforded him by *The Magnificent Seven's* fine script.

There are a few successful characters in *Battle,* notably B-movie queen Sybil Danning as the kamikaze Valkyrie and George Peppard as Cowboy, a space jockey enamored with American Westerns. On the other hand, both Richard Thomas and his love interest, Darlene Flugel, are wooden and unconvincing. As the leads, they make it tough to care

if Akir is saved. At least villain John Saxon shows more than bemusement when he's on the screen.

The real key to enjoying this film is to watch for the references to and pale parodies of other SF films, such as *Star Wars, Forbidden Planet,* and *2001.* Some of these nods to past greats are clever, but never shine enough to make the film engrossing. *Battle* is too long at 104 minutes, too, and drags especially in the final battle, where we are graced with poor special effects, evil characters who make stupid mistakes, and recycled footage of plastic spaceships exploding. You'd be better off watching the seriously flawed but superior Mel Brooks film, *Spaceballs.*

FIEND WITHOUT A FACE

1958, 75 Minutes
Anglo Amalgamated—MGM/Republic
Director: Arthur Crabtree
Starring: Marshall Thompson, Kim Parker

***1/2

An American military airfield in rural Canada and the town nearby are plagued by mysterious murders. The locals think the deaths are the result of the nuclear-powered radar tests going on at the base or perhaps even caused by an American soldier gone mad. The military tries to calm their fears by putting Major Cummings (Marshall Thompson) on the case. What he discovers is far more disturbing than the townsfolk could have foreseen in their most lurid nightmares.

The major uncovers a mysterious power loss at the radar base, which foils the equipment's intended use (spying on the Russians, of course. The film was made in the fifties after all). It seems that a certain cranky old scientist named Walgate is experimenting nearby with the materialization of thought, diverting the energy he needs from the base's nuclear plant. Walgate has succeeded only in creating the scary little monsters that have been preying on the locals.

Fiend moves along slowly at first, but as the film rolls on and the pace picks up, you'll find yourself caught up in the story. The creatures—invisible at first—are the real stars of the show. They look like bowling ball-sized brains, with snaking spinal cord tails, that leap around and ooze jelly when shot. Clips of these truly unsettling beasties in action have shown up on *The Wonder Years.* They also served as the inspiration for one of Catherine O'Hara's statues in *Beetlejuice.*

The film is not one that holds up well under careful critical scrutiny. The editing is pretty bad, the use of stock footage obvious and jarring. Sound and music are handled effectively when the brain creatures are on the screen (especially when they get shot), but otherwise is weak. The ending of the film, too, leaves much to be desired.

In many places *Fiend*'s age shows, as well. The nuclear paranoia seems a bit dated, for example. Compared to the indirect depiction of the Russians, however, the atomic philosophy is cutting edge thought. More than once, the base brass suggest that when the townsfolk know the radiation is being used to spy on the Communists, they'll be quite cooperative. I guess local murders can be brushed off, just so long as they're committed while fighting the Red Menace.

You'll find *Fiend Without a Face* entertaining despite these flaws. Perhaps some films just aren't meant to be studied closely.

TREMORS

1990, 95 Minutes
Universal/MCA
Director: Ron Underwood
Starring: Kevin Bacon, Fred Ward, Finn Carter, Michael Gross, Victor Wong

*****

I wasn't expecting much from this film when I first went to see it at the theater, just an average, sporadically gory *Jaws* rip-off. Perhaps a version of the not-so-classic *Blood Beach* set in the desert. I couldn't have been more wrong.

Tremors is an original and very witty monster film, in the tradition of the giant mutation movies of the 1950s. Director Ron Underwood and screenwriters S. S. Wilson and Brent Maddock give their colossal creature film much more to offer than *Beginning of the End* or even the exciting giant ant flick, *Them! Tremors* has fine actors cast as strongly defined characters, snappy dialogue, a tight plot, and a nice balance of humor and shock.

We open with two jacks-of-all-trades, Valentine (Kevin Bacon) and Earl (Fred Ward), who are tiring of their drab life in the tiny town of Perfection, Nevada. They are set to head off to the "big city" when bodies start showing up and people begin to disappear. By the time they discover the huge leechlike things burrowing beneath the ground, pulling people to their doom, the heroes and about eight others are trapped. With the help of a visiting graduate student (Finn Carter), they try to outsmart the brainy beasts before the monsters can swallow up the last of Perfection's citizenry.

Bacon and Ward are wonderful as rural, unlikely heroes. Their banter is sharp, and their relationship genuine and warm. Victor Wong, veteran of many genre films, puts in his usual strong performance as the owner of the general store. Plaudits also go to Michael Gross (dad from *Family Ties*) and country singer Reba McEntire for playing a gun-toting, dynamite–tossing survivalist couple. The cast works well together, and the scenes where their characters attempt to forge a coherent battle plan are great. The citizens even have trouble naming the beasties (though "graboids" is the frontrunner for the honor).

What really places *Tremors* into the five-star firmament is the film's wonderful manipulation of SF/giant mutation film cliches. Finn Carter as the pretty young scientist/grad student, Ronda, is often badgered for clues as to the creatures' next move. In the fifties, the ever-efficient lab jockey would have had the answers; Ronda just throws up her hands and says, "Why do you keep asking me?"

Don't underestimate the film's potential scare factor. Though the dialogue tends toward witty banter, *Tremors* will have you holding your breath when the monsters are stalking their prey. The whole concept for the graboids works to the movie's advantage. After all, how many people hate to have their ankles grabbed by something they can't see? There's a bit of gore, too, but it's handled with restraint.

Can I say anything else good about *Tremors*? Probably, but I think you've got the idea. Rent this film.

Talking about another movie after that glowing review would be a bit of a letdown, so I'll wrap it up for this month. See you next time for a special column dealing with four or five film adaptations of Lovecraft stories—a must for all you Cthulhu fans!

❑

The New Rogues Gallery

Two Heads Are Better Than One

by Eric L. Boyd

A druid acolyte wandered through the temple gardens, hoping to meet the talking white elephant another acolyte claimed to overhear the previous day. The aspiring druid's search yielded only two voices, which he heard coming from the direction of the temple pond. The voices were arguing over the definition of some exotic term called existentialism. Curious, the acolyte paused for a second, trying to glean something from the conversation.

"Nack," the first voice stated, "you have obviously overlooked the role of chaos in formulating your logic."

"On the contrary Nick, my misguided brother," the second replied. "You have obviously overlooked the tenets of law and their effect on the multiverse in the second postulate of Caamuus' First Discourse."

Unexpectedly, a twig snapped under the acolyte's boots, and suddenly the heads of the two speakers rose up over the top of a large bush. One visage bore a gigantic silver helm in the shape of a dragon's head. The other wore a golden circlet embedded with an emerald the size of a large man's fist. To the eavesdropper's utter horror, both heads were attached to the same giant body.

As the acolyte fled in terror, the voices spoke in unison. "Uh, hello there young fellow, we're Nicknack. . . ."

Nicknack Two-Heads

3rd Level Male Ettin Druid

STR: 20
INT: 17
WIS: 18
DEX: 12
CON: 18
CHA: 15

AC Normal: 3
Hit Points: 57 (10 hit dice)
Alignment: Neutral
Height: 12'
Weight: 426 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Black/Brown
Age: 32

Weapon Proficiencies: Club, scimitar
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Survival (mountains) (17), riding (land-based, elephants) (21), hunting (17), religion (18), herbalism (17), reading/writing (Common) (18)
Languages: Ettin, Orcish, Common, Treant

Magic Items: *Figurine of wondrous power* (white marble elephant)
Spells/day: 4, 3

Spells Usually Carried: (First level) *animal friendship, detect magic, entangle, locate animals or plants;* (second level) *augury, goodberry, speak with animals*

Appearance: Nicknack is a powerful, imposing-looking ettin. His left and right sides are mirror images of each other. Nicknack bathes at least twice a day, and consequently his skin is a rosy pink. His fingers are immaculately manicured, and his hair is neatly curled and combed. He usually wears a simple brown robe and sandals. On his right head often sits a silver helm shaped like a dragon's skull (a burned-out *helm of opposite alignment*). On his left he wears a golden circlet embedded with a dark green emerald worth 5,000 gp (a burned-out *gem of insight*). He carries two gigantic scimitars, tucked into his belt (damage 3d6 + STR bonus). These he wields simultaneously without penalty.

Background: Nicknack is a rarity—an ettin with identical twin heads, neither of which is dominant and both of which contribute to his high intelligence because of the stimulating competition for superiority.

While still a young ettin, Nicknack came to dominate a powerful orc tribe after slaying the chieftain. He led the tribe on a five-year reign of terror over the surrounding region. When his orc horde was finally destroyed by a superior human army, Nicknack adopted a solitary life, became an adventurer, and started wandering throughout Faerun.

On one grand adventure, Nicknack slew a red dragon and acquired its rich treasure horde. As he rumaged through the wealth, the ettin unknowingly placed a *helm of opposite alignment* on one head, while holding a *gem of insight*. The natural symmetry of Nicknack's body, coupled with the potent magic of the *helm* and *gem* set up a severe magical transformation. Nicknack's heads became opposite in alignment, with one becoming good, and the

Continued on page 30

Aussie Complex

Paranoia Societies From Down Under

by John Patruno

Life in Aussie Complex, where Sydney used to be, is fun and exciting. The computer says so. Can the computer be wrong?

Troubleshooters have more fun and excitement in Aussie Complex than anyone else. Troubleshooters also have twice the average life span when compared to infrareds; their average life expectancy per clone is a whopping three days. That's right, Aussie Complex is just as deadly (and as fun) as Alpha Complex. The main difference is there are new Australian secret societies, service groups, and the replacement of bouncy bubbly beverage with a brown bouncy bubbly beverage referred to as Fosters.

Aussie Secret Societies

WAXHEADS: This society believes in a mythical place where tall, bronzed muscle men ride huge walls of water while standing on nothing more than a board made of fiberglass. Members of this society should do all they can to get blond hair and a good tan.

Friends: Life-Be-In-It Crew, Humanists, Romantics.

Enemies: Revheads, Protech, Corpore Metal.

Conversation: Like bogus man, like totally tubular.

PUB CRAWLERS: This society's beliefs revolve around places that were called "pubs" or "hotels" in the old reckoning. It was rumored that in this place a brown bouncy bubbly beverage that was much stronger than today's Fosters was consumed. The main event in the society's year is a "pub crawl" modelled after those held in the old reckoning. Unfortunately, there is only one "pub," so most pub crawlers simply crawl around the floor drinking illegal Fosters and becoming "happy."

Friends: Sky Channellers, Death Leopards.

Enemies: Derryns.

Conversation: Hic@*Hic@*Hic@*....

SKY CHANNEL: This society revolves around a thing of old reckoning called "Sky Channel." It was rumored that certain pubs had this Sky Channel apparatus which they picked up with a dish and which gave them 24-hour coverage of sports and entertainment programs. The society is obsessed with picking up this Sky Channel thing, and the members are constantly trying to use dishes so they can see such legendary sports as boxing, rugby league, and midget throwing.

Friends: Pub Crawlers.

Enemies: Derryns.

Conversation: Kill 'em, hit 'em, C'mon ya wimp, get into it ya mug.

REVHEADS: This society worships a legendary transbot called a Monaro and the great men who drove them. Revheads are obsessed with recreating their heroes and their heroes' cars. Revheads go around with body hair in every conceivable place, and a massive amount of grease holding it down. They are constantly trying to fit large engines into small transbots, make engines that make as much noise as possible, create contraptions that play highly treasonous ditties of old reckoning such as "La Coocaracha," and find lots of shiny strands of metal to put around their necks. Their leader, the legendary COMM-O-DOR has managed to fit an engine into a car three times smaller than it.

Friends: Protech.

Enemies: Waxheads, Romantics, Humanists.

Conversation: Awright mate, those are some really great chains, but you need a grease and oil change for your hair.

THE DERRYNS: This society sprung from the legendary Derryn Hinch, king of a thing called current affairs reporting in the old reckoning. Derryns must wear a fake beard at all times and arrange their hair so not a single strand will appear out of place. The Computer supports The Derryns because The Derryns expose traitors and traitorous activities. Derryns utter inane phrases such as "Shame, shame, shame," and "I'm going to say it now, I'm going to say it here, if you don't believe me, I'm saying it."

Friends: The Computer.

Enemies: Everyone else.

Conversation: Some troubleshooters are traitors. Shame, shame shame. I'm a Derryn, that's life.

THE LIFE-BE-IN-IT CREWS. This society is based upon a series of video tapes featuring the Life-Be-In-It ads. These ads describe strange mythical places and things. They constantly refer to a spot called outdoors, which is mainly green and has several brown columns with even more green stuff on them. The video tapes also recommend the consumption of shiny red things called apples, and even more green things called vegetables. Much like the Sierra Club, the Life-Be-In-It Crew is looking for anything natural from the outdoors as well as searching for the legendary leader, a rotund man named "Norm," security clearance unknown.

Friends: Waxheads, Humanists, Romantics.

Enemies: Protech, Corpore Metal.

Conversation: Green is good, green is healthy, I love my greens.

KAMIKAZES: This is the most treasonous of all secret societies, much like the Communist Society in Alpha Complex. All members of this party believe they are Japanese warriors from World War II. Little is known of this Japanese era. In fact, most members aren't really sure what a true Japanese person looks like. All that is known is that they wore headbands and leather caps and could really hurt people with their knowledge of martial arts. Nobody is certain what martial arts include. Some believe it is practiced by violent people who throw objects of art. Others think that martial arts was simply drawing pictures of war and soldiers and making them so disgusting that the opposition was shocked into surrender. Not much Japanese is known in Aussie Complex, apart from the following words: Karate, Toyota, Bushido, Toshiba, Ninjitsu, Shinobi, Fujitsu, and Honda. Many members of the Kamikazes wouldn't have a clue what any of these words mean, but they use them frequently in sentences anyway.

Friends: Nobody.

Enemies: Everyone.

Conversation: Back off citizen, I'm a

master of Toyota, an ancient martial art.

Table For Secret Societies

Roll	Secret Society
1	Life-Be-In-It Crew
2	Computer Phreaks
3	Sky Channel
4	Anti Mutant
5	Pub Crawlers
6	Corpore Metal
7	Revheads
8	Death Leopard
9	Waxheads
10	FCCCP
11	Derryns
12	Frankenstein Destroyers
13	Kamikaze
14	Humanists
15	Free Enterprise
16	Illuminati
17	Protech
18	Psion
19	PURGE
20	Romantics

Service Groups

All service groups in Aussie Complex are the same as Alpha Complex, except for internal security and research and design. Internal security is now referred to as ASIO (Aussie Security Intelligence Operations).

ASIO are ever on the alert for traitors. One ASIO clone (also a member of the Derryns) actually conducted research into treasonous activities he believed The Computer was behind. His next clone did not continue the research.

Research and design is called the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization), named after a legendary research organization from the old reckoning.

These R&D men make just as sadistic inventions as their Alpha Complex counterparts. ❑

Bookwyrms

Continued from page 20

only stop the plan that is currently underfoot, but live to tell about it. For if there's one thing other than magic that the Red Wizards are good at, it's holding grudges against those they think have wronged them.

Rabe says she enjoys writing about the Harpers because the loose-knit organization is intriguing and an integral part of the Realms. "Harper members are diverse. They do not have to be human, they are not limited to a geographic region, and they present an author with a good bit of freedom and a challenge." *Red Magic* adds to the Harpers' lore, she says, because it examines some of the organization's motives and operations.

The introduction of the Harpers series gives TSR's book department a chance to explore many areas of the Forgotten Realms, as well as the lives of its inhabitants. Because the Harpers consist of beings from all walks of life, they are not limited to certain areas, or even specific time periods. Their lore is rich, their contributions many. And yet they are not all-powerful or perfect. They are *nosy meddlers, keepers of the balance* between man and nature, and self-appointed protectors who when necessary provide a welcome refuge for the weak and threatened. We can identify with both their heroic feats, and their all-too-human failings. They are the Harpers, Guardians of the Realms.

We welcome suggestions from you, our readers, on areas that you would like to see covered in future volumes of the Harpers series. The story about the Red Wizards of Thay is being done, in part, because of reader requests. Do you have favorite places, heroes or villains you'd like to see involved in a Harper's tale? Drop us a note at TSR and let us know. ❑

New Rogues Gallery

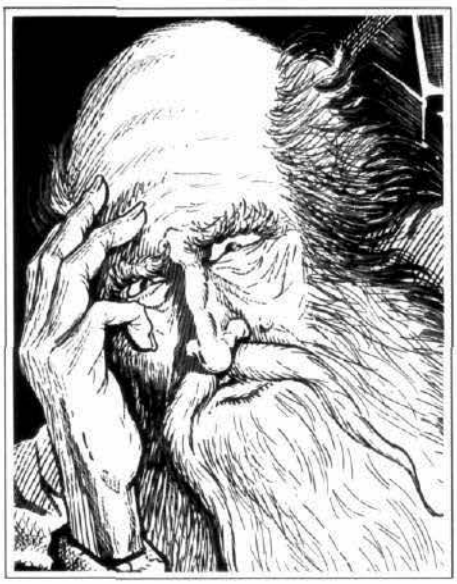
Continued from page 28

other remaining evil. The poor ettin nearly went insane, thrashing about in the forest until he was discovered by an old druid, Gallan of the Woods. With the druid's help, Nicknack balanced his heads out, becoming neutral. However, Nick usually still finds the precepts of law more convincing, while Nack sees chaos as appealing—they reach every decision through laborious logical reasoning.

Gallan quickly recognized Nicknack's natural intelligence and wisdom, and trained the ettin in the basics of the druidic faith. Further, Nicknack learned to read and write, and his heads devoured every book they could find on philosophy, religion, and morality.

Nicknack, after much debate, found contentment in the teachings of Silvanus, and he diligently applied himself in the service of the Oak Father. He evolved as a druid and a philosopher—and a master of compromise. Upon Gallan's death, the ettin began to wander the Realms again, seeking new insights and discovering new wonders. In the course of his travels, he acquired a *figurine of wondrous power*, a white elephant he calls Raj.

Nicknack can be encountered anywhere in the Realms, usually astride the massive white elephant. Many legends are spreading about the ettin philosopher. Recently, Nicknack has been advising Ravens Bluff's Lord Mayor Charles Oliver O'Kane. However, he is unlikely to hold the position long; he likes to travel. ❑



Conventions

Ogden Game Day, June 29 *Ogden, UT*
Utah's only Network club invites you to its game day at the Weber County Library, 2464 Jefferson St. in Ogden. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. There will be open gaming, a DM's workshop, a figure-painting workshop, and a sanctioned Network event for the original AD&D® game. A $1.00 donation is required at the door. For information, send a SASE to: Ogden Gaming Club, c/o Phillip Rogich, 1155 E 32nd St. #5, Ogden, UT 84403.

Michicon Gamefest '91, June 21 *Southfield, MI*
About 2,000 gamers are expected to attend this convention, which will be held at the Southfield Civic Center, in Southfield, a northern suburb of Detroit, MI. There will be 60 board game events, 60 miniatures events, and 40 role playing tournaments. There will be 35 dealer booths, three game auctions, and open gaming. Advance registration is $12 for all three days, or $7 for one day. The convention is accessible from I-96, I-75, US 10 and US 29. For information or to preregister, write: Metro Detroit Gamers, P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192. For daytime information call Barry Jensen at 313-953-2125.

Glathricon '91, June 21-23 *Evansville, IN*
The 8th annual Glathricon gaming convention will be held at the Executive Inn in Evansville. Author Ed Greenwood is guest of honor. Other guests include artist Alan Clark, DM Don Bingle, and others. Network tournaments include AD&D Game Feature, Masters, Grand Masters, Joe Martin Benefit, and many others. Admission at the door is $20. Discounted pre-registration is available. For more information and registration forms write: Evansville Gaming Guild. P.O. Box 15414, Evansville, IN 47716, or call 812-421-1010.

Origins '91, July 4-7 *Baltimore, MD*
The 17th annual Origins convention moves east this year. The extensive schedule of game events will include 10 Network tournaments, most of them brand new. For more information write: GEMCO, P.O. Box 609, Randallstown, MD 21133.

Coscon '91, July 5-7 *Slippery Rock, PA*
Sponsored by the Circle of Swords Gaming Guild, this three-day convention will be held at Slippery Rock University. Scheduled events include first-run Network tournaments, other Network role-playing events, military miniatures, board games, dealers area, flea market, and a miniatures painting contest. Inexpensive university housing is available on site. Registration is $15 until June 15th. For more details send a SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler, PA 16003-2126, or call Dave Schnur at 412-283-1159.

Dragon Con '91, July 12-14 *Atlanta, GA*
Guests for this event include Piers Anthony, L. Sprague and Catherine de Camp, and several other authors and artists. More than 100 tournaments include feature- and masters-level Network events, plus role playing, strategic, miniature, and computer gaming and 24-hour open gaming. Programming includes four tracks of panels and demonstrations, a writer's workshop, a costume contest with a $1,000 cash prize (please write for details), an art show and print shop, a video room, auctions, and more. Pre- registration is $26 through June 15th. For more information send a SASE to Dragon Con, Box 47696, Atlanta, GA 30362 or call 404-925-2813. Purchase advance memberships by credit card by calling Ticketmaster at 404-249- 6400.

Cangames '91, August 2-5 *Ottawa, Ontario, Canada*
Spend an eventful weekend in Canada's capital. Canada's longest-running game convention is being held this year at the Skyline Hotel in downtown Ottawa. Features include role playing games, board games, miniatures battles, an auction, and a dealers area. Pre- registration for the weekend is $20, $30 at the door. For information, please write: Cangames 91, Box 3358, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1P 6H8.

GEN CON® 24 Game Fair, August 8-11 *Milwaukee, WI*
The world's oldest and largest gaming convention once again will be held at the MECCA convention center. More than 1,000 games and seminars covering every type of gaming are being planned for this immense event. Network attractions include three dozen tournaments, a host of game demonstrations and seminars, a Wednesday-night member's meeting, Friday breakfast and Gamers' Choice awards ceremony, a costume contest, and an art show. Other events include a huge auction and a miniatures painting competition. For more information or preregistration forms write: GEN CON Game Fair HQ, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

Network Blowout in the Works

Long-time fans of the GEN CON game fair know the RPGA Network takes special pride in the programming it presents there. This year, however, the Network plans to outdo itself with a record 37 tournaments and a horde of special events. The action begins Wednesday night, August 7th with the annual members meeting. Once again, Network clubs will pull out all the stops in the annual games decathlon skit competition. Sit back and enjoy as each club strains to present a skit that is more entertaining and original than the others. The Network staff anticipates even more outrageously funny shenanigans than last year, when members were treated to slapstick comedy, bizarre costumes, and eccentric dialogue.

During the convention, travel-minded gamers who are 18 or older can vie for a trip to European GEN CON game fair, which will be held in England in November, 1991. Contestants must enter the Network's AD&D game Benefit tournament for the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and the Network AD&D game Feature tournament. All contestants who win their sessions of the Benefit will compare their aggregate scores from all three rounds of the Feature tournament. The qualifying Benefit winner with the highest aggregate Feature score wins the trip.

Other Network highlights include the annual Network breakfast and Gamers' Choice Awards ceremony on Friday, August 9th.

THE PHARAOH IKANTKOPE RULED EGYPT 3500 YEARS AGO...
13th FLOOR
SHUFFLE SHUFFLE CREEAK CREEAK CREEAK
SPLOOSH SPLOOSH SPLOP
HE WAS ENTOMBED WITH ALL HIS POSSESSIONS - INCLUDING SERVANTS - TO AWAIT THE NEXT LIFE...
SHUFFLE SHUFFLE
CREEAK
SPLOP
... BUT HIS ETERNAL SLEEP WAS DISTURBED WHEN HIS PYRAMID WAS OPENED AND ITS CONTENTS BROUGHT TO AMERICA...
WOLFF & BYRD COUNSELORS OF THE MACABRE
CREEEK...
...NOW HE WALKS THE EARTH AGAIN... CONFUSED, BETRAYED ...AND ANGRY!
I CAN'T SAY I BLAME HIM, WOLFF...
SHUFFLE SHUFFLE SHUFFLE..
...I KNOW HOW CRANKY I GET WHEN I'M AWAKENED FROM A SOUND SLEEP...
THEN YOU COULD IMAGINE HIS DISPOSITION WAKING UP IN MODERN TIMES SLAPPED WITH A SUIT FROM--
DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING, BYRD?
IT MUST BE IKANTKOPE ... I'LL LET HIM IN
IT BETTER BE. HE HAD AN APPOINTMENT WITH US OVER AN HOUR AGO
I HOPE YOU DON'T BUST HIS CHEOPS FOR BEING LATE, WOLFF. HIS TEMPER IS PRETTY FOUL... AMONG OTHER THINGS...
HE-- HEY, WAIT...
I CAN EXPLAIN...
HOLD IT...
NO!
CRASH
BYRD?
I WAS AFRAID THIS WOULD HAPPEN...
STOP! LISTEN! WOLFF! HELP...
AIEEEEEEE
WAIT--WE CAN TALK THIS OVER...
NO USE-IKANTKOPE ARRIVED AFTER THE CLEANING LADY BEGAN HER SHIFT!
SO SUE ME-- EVERYONE ELSE IS
EEEEEE
I QUIT!
© 1991 BATTON LASH
GROAN! NOW WE'LL HEAR FROM THE LAND LORD AGAIN. HE BLAMES US FOR HIS LARGE TURNOVER IN PERSONNEL...
HEY-YOU SAID TO KEEP THE BANDAGES ON... I WOULD LOOK BETTER IN COURT...
WE APOLOGIZE FOR THIS, PHARAOH..
...BUT OFFICE MAINTENANCE IS AN AGE-OLD PROBLEM FOR US..
OH YEAH? TRY BEING BURIED WITH YOUR HIRED HELP! I EXPECTED TO WAKE UP WITH HOSANNAS FROM THE GODS... NOT A LAWSUIT FROM MY SERVANTS! DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME-AND-A-HALF ADDS UP TO AFTER 3500 YEARS?
BATTON LASH